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A MEMOIR OF
LT.-COL. EDWARD ANTHONY STEEL, D.S.O.

LIEUT.-COL. E. A. STEEL, D.S.O.

Frontispiece.

A MEMOIR OF
LT.-COL. EDWARD ANTHONY STEEL, D.S.O.

R.H.A. AND R.F.A.

1880-1919

CONSISTING CHIEFLY OF HIS LETTERS AND DIARIES
WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

COMPILED BY HIS FATHER

COLONEL J. P. STEEL

F.R.G.S., LATE ROYAL ENGINEERS

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL,
HAMILTON, KENT & CO., LTD.
1921

No, not for me be the cypress wreath braided,
Never o'er me be the proud marble reared;
Vain all the show with which pomp hath paraded
Names that in hearts are enshrined and endeared.

R. C. C.

TO THE MEMORY OF MY SON'S COMRADES
WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR, AND TO
THE SURVIVORS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHOSE
TENDER CARE WHEN HE WAS SEVERELY
WOUNDED ENABLED HIS RETURN TO DUTY; AND
TO HIS MANY FRIENDS IN THREE CONTINENTS
THIS RECORD OF AN EVENTFUL LIFE
IS DEDICATED

INTRODUCTION

Among civilised nations it has been the custom from the earliest times to perpetuate the memory of their dead, and to mark their final resting-place by monuments varying in importance from the pyramid to the simple cross: though it must be admitted that in our own country this method of keeping green the memory of our departed has not always resulted in erecting works representative either of art or beauty.

In more recent times the tombstone and inscription on brass tablet has to some extent superseded the monument, except in the case of individuals of national or historical importance; and again, the epitaph has had its vogue, in which the survivors endeavoured to assuage their grief, as well as to mark their sense of loss, by exaggerating the virtues and accomplishments of their lost relatives: the Great War has caused us to reconsider many of our previous conceptions of duty and conduct, and with our dead reckoned in thousands our perspective has been altered. Still the desire remains, and a recent discussion as to the form to be taken has indicated its intensity; and if any other evidence were wanting it would be found in the periodical 'In Memoriam' insertions in the daily papers, in which the epitaph of last century is superseded by suitable quotations from classic or poet.

In all these cases the desire to locate the resting-place of the dead has not been lost sight of, and the failure to discover it has led to dubious methods of research.

The subject of this Memoir lies buried in the Cossack cemetery at Omsk, a city of importance in Siberia, but until recently little more than a geographical expression to all but students of the East or of geography. His resting-

place may never be visited, before another generation it may be forgotten; and its very remoteness cannot be contemplated without emotion. These considerations have suggested an endeavour to keep the memory of this gallant soldier green by substituting for marble or brass a simple record of his short but eventful life. It will be seen from the story that in September 1916 he was so severely wounded that practically all hope of further distinction was denied him, and he was condemned for one and a half years to see his contemporaries—not always of superior ability—pass over him and obtain further opportunity for distinction. I know he felt this keenly. I sometimes think that we do not give sufficient credit to our killed and wounded for winning our battles; it may well be that in some cases they deserved more than the survivors: but let that pass, except that perhaps it gives the clue to his departure on his last adventure, when, according to general opinion, his health was not sufficiently repaired for this undertaking.

I remember going to see him at school, and expressing surprise to his schoolmaster that he shaped better at cricket than I expected. His master remarked that he was very modest about his own performances. This characteristic he preserved through life, although his more than average ability might easily have encouraged conceit. He was of untiring industry; whatever he attempted, he gave it his best, and whether at work or play he was equally keen. Under a somewhat brusque manner on first acquaintance, due to a certain shyness that he never quite overcame, he concealed a warm heart and an affectionate nature. He was no courtier, and had scant regard for rank or station unless it was supported by merit; he was a shrewd observer of competence or incompetence in those both above and below him, and as far as I recollect, his judgment was generally sound. He easily made friends with others of similar tastes, and never forgot those who had been kind to him, whatever their station of life. Besides being an athlete of distinction, he had a decided talent for the acquisition of languages, and whether in the study of

economics—a course of which he passed with credit—or in a course of surveying which he undertook to fit himself as an explorer and for boundary work, he displayed the same industry and thoroughness. Socially, he was always an acquisition. As master of the ceremonies, actor, or songster, he was in great request, equally in the barracks with the men or in general society.

His early death will be felt as a personal loss to many beyond the family circle, both in the ranks of the Royal Artillery and even in remote Rhodesia, and all will share the regret that an adventure entered on with such high hopes should have had such a disastrous result, and that his last days should have been saddened by the knowledge that the cause he had espoused had so far not been successful. Writing to General Sir A. Holland, I made use of a somewhat similar expression, and referring to this the General wrote: 'I feel, however, that the touchstone of life is not so much in achievement as in the single-minded effort to assist in a noble cause, and judged by this standard, your son's life gained its true end.' With that judgment we may rest content.

J. P. S.

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EDWARD ANTHONY STEEL

CHAPTER I

Early Life—Education—R.M.A., Woolwich—First Commission, Aldershot—Work and Play—Transfer to Royal Horse Artillery—Funeral of Queen Victoria—Manual of Artillery Practice prepared.

EDWARD ANTHONY STEEL, the subject of this memoir, was born at Ajmere on December 12, 1880. His parents were temporarily residing in the Residency, which had been placed at their disposal by the Governor-General's Agent and Chief Commissioner of Ajmere, Major Bradford,[1] who was on tour, and to whose administration Major Steel, R.E., was Secretary in the Public Works Department. On the return of the Chief Commissioner, Mrs. Steel returned with her children to Mount Abu, and remained there until 1884, when Major Steel was advised to take sick leave and came to England.

Shortly after reaching England Major and Mrs. Steel settled at Park Gate, Wanstead, and in 1886 Major Steel returned to India and resumed his duties in Rajputana.

For those interested in genealogical inquiries the pedigree of E. A. Steel is given in an appendix, and can be referred to by those who desire information in such matters.

Edward Anthony Steel remained at Park Gate, Wanstead, with his mother until 1889, when the lease of the house at Wanstead expired and Mrs. Steel decided to make a trip to India and spend the summer at Naini Tal, where Lt.-Col. Steel, now Chief Engineer and Secretary to the Government of the N.W.P., was residing; and as

[1] Later Col. Sir E. R. C. Bradford, Bart., G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.S.I. (deceased).

the boy Edward was not old enough to be sent to school, Mrs. Steel took him with her.

The journey, at the hottest time in the year, was uneventful, except that at Malta they encountered Col. Helsham-Jones, R.E.,[1] who took care of them and placed them under an obligation that they never forgot.

Their stay at Naini Tal, in the entourage of the Lt.-Gov., Sir Auckland Colvin, passed pleasantly enough. During that exceptionally heavy rainy season many houses were damaged, and it was necessary to consider whether Government House should be removed to the opposite side of the lake.[2]

The season over, Col. Steel returned to his duty with the Government, and Mrs. Steel, with Edward, went to Calcutta, visiting on the way her brother, Sydney Thuillier, a tea-planter in Behar, and enrolled in the Behar Light Horse.

In Calcutta they stayed a week with her brother, Col. (now Sir H.) Thuillier, Surveyor-General of India, and eventually embarked in the P. and O. steamer for Colombo, where they were met by her cousins, the Firmingers, and after a short visit continued their journey home.

In the following year, 1891, Col. Steel obtained furlough and came home, and the family settled at Lowestoft on the East Coast. The eldest son, John Miles, went to Stubbington preparatory to joining the Navy, the daughter, Frances, and Edward remained at home for a year, after which Frances was sent to St. Margaret's, at that time a well-known school in Trafalgar Square, Chelsea, and Edward to Messrs. Bruton and Osborne at Brighton. He remained there till 1895. It should be said here that it had been intended to send him to Winchester, but after much consideration and Dr. Fearon's assurance that the curriculum at Winchester would be of little assistance to him if he went to Woolwich, this plan was rejected and he was sent to Dover College, mainly on the representation of Col. Eteson (Bursar of the College), whom Col. Steel had known

[1] Died 1920. [2] This has since been carried out.

CAPTAIN OF HOCKEY AT DOVER COLLEGE.

Facing p. 2.

CADET, WOOLWICH.

WINNING HURDLES, WOOLWICH.

Facing p. 3.

intimately in India.[1] From there he passed into Woolwich. He got no prizes in the classes, but obtained the first in Riding, Horsemanship, and Swimming, and in Athletics the Hurdles.

To his great chagrin he just missed going to the Boer War. At the end of a year at Woolwich, the Cadets were asked to elect if they would go out at once or stay on and take their chance of getting engineers. Edward decided to remain, but the arrangement was upset immediately afterwards, and he was flung out and consequently below all his juniors in the previous term, and in the meantime the last Batteries to go to Africa were completed.

Receiving his first commission in January 1900, he was posted to the 49th Brigade, consisting of three Howitzer Batteries, Nos. 146, 147, 148, of a newly-formed brigade then being mobilised for the Boer War under Major Battiscombe, from recruits strengthened by the return of several convalescents from South Africa, and Lt. Steel was posted to the 148th Battery, Major Lyon, R.F.A., O.C.[2]

[1] Mr. Lee, the present Head Master of Dover College, has kindly given me the following account of his career.

'Your son's batting averages were as follows:—

	No. of Innings.	Total Runs.	Highest Score.	Times not Out.	Average.
1897	11	47	16*	3	6·87
1898	11	233	61*	2	25·88 (2nd best)

Bowling.

	Overs.	Maidens.	Runs.	Wickets.	Average.
1897	88	21	179	14	12·78
1898	50	9	118	7	16·85

'He played three-quarter back in the Football Team, forward in the Hockey XI. He was in the Running Team in 1897 and won the 120 yards Hurdle Race in 18½ seconds in the Inter-School Sports with King's School, Canterbury, and Sutton Valence School. In 1898 he won the Hurdles again in 18⅘ seconds.

'I well remember persuading him to do his hurdles in three strides and was proud when he won the Championship in India. He was a fine, all-round man, and I was very sorry indeed to hear of his death.'

[2] Major Lyon, who commanded the 148th Battery, wrote of him: 'Lt. Steel, R.F.A., served in my Battery for about twelve months in 1900-1. He showed much zeal and energy, and every promise of being a most capable officer. He left the Battery to join the R.H.A.'

He, like other young officers at that time, was anxious to get to South Africa, and he wrote to General Raper, who had known him from childhood, asking him whether he had any chance of going either with drafts to replace casualties, or if he could be attached to some South African Native Corps. General Raper told him that, as he belonged to a Battery already detailed to be in readiness for South Africa if the artillery of the 8th Division were ordered to go, he was not likely to be taken except with his own Battery. As regards employment with a native regiment, the artillery being short of officers, no R.A. officer would be allowed to go at that time. And there would be no advantage in getting his name down on the list for that Service.

On receipt of this reply he settled down to his work in the Battery, took on the secretaryship of the football club, and did all he could to train his men for war or peace. The result of his work will appear later. As to his success with the football club, it is on record that he succeeded in getting his Battery into the second round of the Army Football Challenge Cup, first by playing a drawn game with the 3rd Worcesters, and then beating them by 5—1. The affair at this time caused tremendous excitement at Aldershot and was commented on in the *Broad Arrow*, which gave a full account of the game, adding : ' The result is highly satisfactory, and Lt. Steel, R.F.A., the Hon. Sec. of the R.A. Football Club, is to be congratulated on having got the R.A. Aldershot Team into the second round for the Challenge Cup. The following composed the team, one man short throughout the game :—

' *Goal* : Gunner James. *Backs* : Driver Ames and Gunner Taylor. *Half-backs* : Lt. Gray, Lt. Steel (Capt.), and Driver Slater. *Forwards* : Gunner Bristoe, Driver Griffiths, Sergeant Baxter, and Gunner Hampson.'

It was not only at football that Lt. Steel thus early made his mark ; he also acquired the reputation of being a smart officer at his work, and later on in the year he was

selected for the Horse Artillery (1901), and ordered to join V Battery, part of which was then at St. John's Wood Barracks, the remainder having gone to Australia with Major Askwith.

Commenting on the transfer the *Broad Arrow* remarked: 'Footballers will be sorry to learn that 2nd Lt. E. A. Steel, the popular Secretary of the 148th Battery Team, has been transferred to V Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, at St. John's Wood.'

With only the skeleton of the Battery there was not much occupation for an energetic officer. It happened that Lt. Steel was detailed on January 31, with twenty mounted men, to act as signallers during the funeral procession on that date of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and to act as orderlies to the G.O.C. Home District, the order being signed by F. C. Ricardo.[1] On April 2 he was promoted 1st Lieutenant, and as only a section of the Battery was there, and only one subaltern besides himself, he did not find the work very attractive, and when he heard from Messrs. Cox and Co. that an officer in L Battery at Secunderabad (Lt. Hambro) was anxious to make an exchange, he availed himself of the opportunity, arranged the transfer with the War Office Authorities, and prepared to embark for India, employing his spare time in preparing a manual for artillery practice, of which Cattermole[2] of Woolwich was the publisher.

The following is an extract from a letter written by Col. Aylmer to Maj.-Gen. J. A. Steel, uncle of Lt. E. A. Steel.

'This,' wrote Col. Aylmer, 'is a most useful little work, and should answer its purpose admirably; it is not often that one hears of such a very young officer taking so much pains and trouble in the interests of the Service to which he belongs, and being able at such an age to impart such useful knowledge. When I served in the Horse and

[1] Now Col. Francis Cecil Ricardo, C.V.O., A.A.G. Home District, 1900 1904, High Sheriff of Berkshire, 1913.

[2] *The Horse and Field Artilleryman's Handbook*, containing section gun drill of the 12- and 15-pounder guns. By Lt. E. A. Steel, R.H.A.

Field Artillery I should have been very glad to have had young subalterns so keen and zealous. This young officer ought to go far, and if he keeps up his knowledge he is certain to be well thought of and given chances of distinguishing himself. He is lucky, for he belongs to the finest Service in the world and joins it young.'

CHAPTER II

Exchange to India, departure—L Battery, Secunderabad—Life there —Trip to South India—Kashmir—Football—Autumn Manœuvres —Visit of Viceroy.

1901

He sailed from Southampton in the P. and O. steamer *Peninsular*. He suffered terribly from seasickness as far as Gibraltar. Feeling better on arrival at Gibraltar, he managed to land, and went up to call on Lady White, but was disappointed at not finding her at home ; for this reason, no doubt, he did not mention it in his letter from Marseilles, and it only transpired through a letter from Lady White to Mrs. Steel of which the following is an extract :—

'The Convent, Gibraltar,
'*Oct.* 4, 1901.

'I am more grieved than I can say that I have missed seeing your son. Your letter reached me when I was just recovering from the Royal visits, and I did not mention, as I should have done, that I was expecting to see your boy off the *Peninsular*. When he called we were on board the *Majestic* lunching with the Admiral, and when we returned home it was too late to see your son. The *Peninsular* had sailed. I am so sorry, for we love to see our friends, or any one belonging to them.'

He passed through Egypt without incident, and had a lovely voyage from there to Bombay.

He stayed at Watson's Hotel, and Hambro, with whom he had made his exchange, came round to see him and brought his butler.[1]

[1] The butler or body servant on the Bombay side of India is a general servant and is usually passed on to a new-comer.

After a long journey of about twenty hours he arrived at Begumpet, about five miles from Trimulgherry, where 'Greathead came to meet me in the Battery Coach.'

The Battery at that time consisted of: Major Ind, on leave, Capt. Greathead, Lt. Jocelyn Mellor, Lt. E. A. Steel, Lt. J. V. Ramsden.[1]

'I was rather disappointed with the place which was to be my home for some time to come. I expected to find a big place something like Aldershot, but you would think there was no one here but yourself, and our Lines are nearly a mile off the Mess. There is not much sport about here. No pig-sticking. Very little football or cricket, and not much in the way of society.

'We live in quarters here, not nearly so nice as a bungalow. I have the room next to Jocelyn.[2] We have excellent servants, and they keep everything very nice.'

'*April* 10.—Jocelyn arrived here suddenly, a week before his leave was up, so there are three of us in our Battery. I have bought rather a fine horse, a bay Australian, and he is arriving to-day.

'Jocelyn is very fit after his sojourn in the Jungle, and has come back with two fine tigers, besides trophies of other varieties.

'I am devoting my time, or whatever is left, to the Battery Football, in which neither Greathead, J., nor Ramsden take

[1] Josslyn V. Ramsden (now Lieut.-Col.), D.S.O., 1915, R.A., son of John C. F. Ramsden, grandson of Sir J. Ramsden, 4th Baronet, the only survivor of these officers.

[2] Jocelyn Mellor (second son of C. W. Mellor, Esq., J.P., Brighton, formerly I.C.S., and Florence (*née* Thuillier), his mother's sister) obtained his first commission from Woolwich in 1897, and was therefore three years senior to E. A. Steel. He was a keen soldier, beloved by his men, towards whom he combined strict discipline with sympathetic treatment to all who were anxious to become efficient. He was described by General Francis as the best H.A. subaltern he had ever known, and this character was endorsed by the O.C. of his own battery. In private life he was universally popular, owing to his attractive personality and his chivalrous and generous bearing to all within his social circle, a keen and intrepid sportsman. For the cause of his early death, which was deplored, not only by his comrades in the Service, but by all who valued its traditions, see p. 39.

any interest. The men are getting quite keen; we hope to win the Cup, which comes on soon.'

'*June* 16.—I had my Exam. yesterday, and hope I have passed, so I may go and see Hart, who is near Madras, I think, and then go and see Aunt Bea.[1] They have just got two months' leave and have gone to Murree. I propose going to join them in Kashmir, where they have gone for two months, so I am planning a short journey in Southern India. I propose going to Madras, Pondicherry, Trichinopoly, Tuticorin, Calicut, Bangalore, Mysore, and finally up to Goa. I hope I may get back safely. I shall have to do some part of the journey in somebody's bullock cart if they will let me.'

'*June* 24.—I have just returned from my last trip and am on my way to Kashmir to join Aunt Bea at Gulmurg.'

'*June* 29.—I arrived at Baramula on the way to Kashmir. A very nice bungalow on the banks of the Jhelum.

'I find I shall have to wait till to-morrow for a pony. In front of me the Jhelum flows very smooth, until about 100 yds. further down it becomes a torrent. I have passed my "A" and "B" all right.'

'*July* 8, *Gulmurg*.—I have been here a week, and am just recovering from the effects of a journey which took nearly eight days. Arrived here last Sunday from Baramula in drenching rain on a small pony.

'They were very surprised to see me on such a terrible day. After this we had a whole week of fine weather, and I have had a ripping time. I have met Mrs. Atkinson, Mrs. and Sybil Beecher, Mrs. MacNeill and her brother, who knows John[2] well, Captain Fisher and Leslie.[3]

'I have just heard my leave has been extended till the 31st of this month; so I shall leave here about the 22nd, visiting Srinagar on the way. I was very glad I came, as

[1] Aunt Bea (*née* Davies), wife of Col. W. Thuillier, I.S.C., his mother's brother.

[2] His elder brother, Lt. John Miles Steel, R.N., at that time commanding T.B. Destroyer *Flying Fish*.

[3] Leslie Thuillier, his cousin.

next year I hope to get home for Frances' [1] wedding, and I think I shall like my own part of the country much better when I get back.'

'*July* 20, *Srinagar*.—I have left Gulmurg, "the Meadow of Roses," now for ever, and am stopping here two days on my way back. This seems a wonderful place, rather like Venice, I expect, as you do everything in boats. Pull up at any one's shop which faces the river, and then go on. I have arranged a trip for to-morrow on the water to see everything for miles around, so I will go on with this later on. I was sorry to leave Gulmurg in a way. There were some nice people there and it 's a nice change from T'gherry, where there 's nought but soldiering, but I shall be glad to get back, I think.'

'*Sunday*.—I don't think I 've ever had a day more unlike a Sunday than to-day. I like keeping Sunday rather, but you can't in a place like this. Ali Jan, a great embroidery merchant, came round in the morning, and I had to go off to his shop, and I got back here at 2 o'clock this afternoon.'

'*Dal Lake*.—I woke up this morning with a beautiful sun shining in the middle of the most beautiful lake in the world. Was surprised by a man turning up in a small boat with wares for sale. How the little boat didn't upset I don't know, but he was almost buried behind bundles of things, which consisted chiefly of guns, rifles (some of his own make, he said), knives, old Persian tulwars, etc. These he spread out on the deck. I explained that I was not going to buy anything at all and had come out for a rest. My boatman, however, played the game well, and I tossed him for half of the real value of the goods in question. Luck was on my side, so I came away with another bundle of goods. To make up for my luck, he suggested I should purchase one of his guns—an absurd thing, of course, on the face of it, to go and buy a gun out here—so I suggested, not to hurt him, we should try them, and he seemed pleased,

[1] Frances, his sister, married L. H. Carr-Birkbeck, M.B., who served during the war with R.A.M.C. and retired in 1919 with rank of Major.

so we landed on a little island called Sonahawk, about 30 yds. broad only, with some trees, and black sheep grazing. He wanted me to try his own make, 500 bore rifle with Eley cordite bullet which he supplied, and the boatman being greatly excited, stuck up a bit of paper on a tree about 20 yds. off. So just to show them what I could do, I took aim and fired. My shoulder was nearly blown off, and a bit of tree came back and nearly stunned me. The tree nearly fell down and the sheep all ran into the water and were nearly drowned, so I returned Ramzanah his own make rifle, and we left the island amidst the shouts of the boatmen, who were greatly impressed with the Sahib's shooting. Our next place was the "Nishat Bagh," where we landed. It consisted of a sort of palace, and behind were gardens beautifully laid out in terraces, and rivulets running through it from the mountain, which towered gloriously behind. I was rather afraid at first of landing, as I couldn't believe a place like this was meant for any casual visitor. But I did, and apparently it was uninhabited, save for a few gardeners who were sleeping. The garden was full of every kind of fruit imaginable, one hardly knew which to pick first, but the peaches, which grew like plums, received most of my attention. It reminded one more of fairy tales one reads, and more than once I felt as if I were wandering through dreamland and should suddenly meet some fairy who would turn me into an animal for trespassing. It is hard to express on paper one's feelings on being alone in one of the most beautiful spots on this earth, so far away from one's home, but I had to leave it, as the day was getting on and I must be back. We went on to another place exactly the same, where half-civilised Kashmiris live in absolute bliss and ignorance of their beautiful surroundings. I got back at 8 P.M., dined at the hotel, and then returned to my boat, which I had taken round to the place where the *Tonga* started at 4 A.M. next morning. As I am travelling down with the English mail I will go on with this along the journey.'

'*July* 26, *Gwalior*.—Arrived here. Staying at the Guest

House, which the Maharajah has built for strangers, but it is more like a palace, with pagoda and turret and beautifully furnished.'

'*July* 27.—Arrived at Bhopal. I love these Indian places which the white man does not frequent, they are the only places where one sees Hindoo life in reality. I thought I had been in some hot places, but never before like to-day. As I write in the moon, beads of perspiration are streaming down all parts of my body—I have lost many pounds.'

'*July* 28.—Went on to Indore. At the Residency met Capt. Dixon, R.H.A., who took me back to dinner. Same day left for Bombay, arriving on the 31st at Trimulgherry.

'Aunt Bea was awfully nice and wouldn't let me pay for anything. It was a good idea sending my book to Mrs. Eustace.[1] I must write to her. I think I am rather good at travelling by train. I don't mind the heat a bit, although it was hot at Gwalior.

'J. is commanding the Battery and doing it well, too, Greathead having gone to Bangalore for a Garrison class.

'I think I told you last mail we had beaten the 49th. The Final was put off last Thursday on account of Lt. Harvey's (4th Hussars) death, and we played the 23rd yesterday in the Final. However, the 23rd have protested that the umpire played over time. I don't know if I told you in my last letter that I heard from Nellie Clarke.'[2]

'*Sept.* 4, *The Mount, Madras*.—I have got here at last. This is a very charming place. Two nice rivers with a beautiful Boating Club, a Gymkhana Club, Racing, and Swimming Baths. So that it is far superior to Bombay in that way, but the heat is terrific.'

[1] Now Lady Eustace (*née* Marina Stewart), the second of four beautiful daughters of the late Sir Donald Stewart, married Capt. (now Sir) Francis Eustace, K.C.B., at that time commanding R.A. at Aldershot, now Col.-Commandant, R.A.

[2] Nellie Clarke ('the Fairy of Portland Place'), only daughter of Gen. Sir Andrew Clarke of the Royal Engineers, Governor of Straits Settlements, Member of Indian Council, etc., married Commander (now Capt.) Sueter, C.B., R.N.

'*Sept.* 11, *Madras*.—No news except the sad bit that we were beaten yesterday in the Final by the 55th, who had come from Belgaum. Every one expected us to win, and photographers had made arrangements to take us next day with the Cup for different English papers. We leave this evening for Secunderabad.'

'*Sept.* 24.—You have heard that our football campaign was not a success. It is very nice here for football really, but not so at Madras, where the heat is terrible. I am sending home the account of the Hyderabad City and the festival we all went to. I want you to try and get some one to take it. I will also send an account of our two Batteries for the Final Madras Cup with the combined photo.

'I have done nothing, except playing a game of cricket last Sunday, and since then we have had parades every day. To-day I am going up to spend the day with the Reids at Bolarum.'

'*Oct.* 16.—To-morrow will be the last day of the Races, and as I have a horse running, I am keen on being down there ; after that I have a rehearsal for a piece I am acting in. It comes off in a fortnight, and I have only just been given the piece. It is called *Ici on parle français*. I have been laid up again the last few days with a kick from a horse on the knee, and it is not right yet.

'I have just come back from the rehearsal (8 P.M.). It went off fairly well. We had a very nice afternoon at the Races, only my horse lost, he was just hustled into 3rd place.

'I told you I was laid up with my knee and am thankful for the rest, and I know J. wishes he could get one too; it would be a well-earned one. You will be glad to hear that we have done awfully well in our preliminary exams., such as Fuze-setting and Laying, and beaten the other Batteries outright.'

'*Oct.* 31.—Last Friday I felt a little fever coming on. I went to bed, and I am in it to-day. For one week I have been suffering from a shocking headache all the time. It went off yesterday, as well as the fever, and this afternoon

I am having my residence transferred to Bolarum to stay with the Reids and be looked after. He is a Gunner Captain in one of the Hyderabad Contingents.

'A shocking bit of luck has happened to me. My syce, riding my beautiful young racing horse, "Flying Fish," let him run away—ran him into a tree, fell off himself, and the horse in some wonderful way was walked up to the sick lines, where after an operation he died in fearful agony. A piece of the tree had entered his flank and caused a terrible wound. There 's over 1000 rupees gone in one blow! It has made me quite sick of the place now. I 've had a rotten time since I 've been out here—no luck anywhere.'

'*Nov.* 14.—I returned from Bolarum to duty again, and last week we had Inspections every day by General Stopford, R.A., previous to going to Practice Camp.'

(The whole of November was spent in Practice Camp at Bellary.)

'*Dec.* 5.—We are now back in Barracks again, and very glad too. I told you we had won the First Prize and First Class, and may win the Madras Presidency Shield. I have just heard from the Barrs,[1] asking me to go there to dinner and meet the Franks.[2] They have also asked me to a dance on the 17th. I am playing football to-day. Dining at the Residency to-night. Hyderabad Contingent Dance on the next day. Our Gunners' Dance on the 11th, so we are quite gay for this place.'

'*Dec.* 26.—Yesterday we celebrated Christmas in a sort of fashion, but we were content to let it pass without much notice. In the evening a silent minute was spent in drinking the health of those at home. Otherwise the place was more deserted than ever. Christmas certainly makes one

[1] Col. Sir David Barr, K.C.S.I., Resident of Hyderabad.

[2] Captain Norman Franks, C.I.E., formerly in the Buffs. In his young days, one of the best steeplechase riders in Europe. He retired young, and invested his capital in coffee plantation with great success. He was a proficient linguist and became tutor to Holkar, and on retiring therefrom was decorated with the Companionship of the Indian Empire. He lost his only son at Cappy, quite early in the war. He was adjutant of his regiment.

OFFICERS L BATTERY, R.H.A., ON FOOT.

Lieut. J. V. Ramsden. Capt. Greathead. Lieut. J. Mellor. Lieut. E. A. Steel.

Facing p. 14.

OFFICERS L BATTERY, R.H.A., MOUNTED.

Facing p. 15.

feel how far away it is to home, and how lonely one really is.

'In the report on Manœuvres His Excellency, the C.-in-C., observes the H.A. was most skilfully handled. It does not seem like me to have a bit of luck like that—I mean Capt. Greathead going sick and I commanding. J. was on the other side with two guns.[1]

'The Assault-at-Arms is on all this week and finishes on Saturday. At present I have won the Heads and Posts (Mounted) and the Bayonet versus Sword. The latter has done for my thumb nearly, he caught me right across the fingers with his sword.'

1902

'*Feb.* 27.—We are having this week R.A. Sports, and I am a groundsman. Many thanks for Marion Doughty's book about Kashmir—it is splendid.'[2]

'*Mar.* 20.—The Secunderabad season is over and people are beginning to leave us. In fact, every one talks of going somewhere except myself. We have been fairly gay this week—what with the Burlesque, Regatta at the Boat Club—Football Tournament—dances and dinners—then there was the wedding at the Residency between Captain Walker, 4th Hussars, and Miss Barr. The Nizam lent them a magnificent gold carriage which we—Captain Greathead, Ramsden, and myself—pulled nearly to pieces with six R.A. horses. It was a great show.

'The Viceroy arrives at Hyderabad on the 29th. We are going down to do escort, I think. I have had a very nice letter from Mrs. Eustace; she says she hasn't heard or seen you for ages.

'Major and Mrs. Cloete have arrived, they seem very nice. I have got two horses now, but one is a brute; he has been absolutely spoilt in the Riding School and become unsafe to ride.'

[1] An interesting account with a map has been omitted for want of space.

[2] *Afoot through the Kashmir Valley*, M. D. (Helton Mervyn). Sands and Co., London. 1902.

'*April* 3.—I have been at the Residency with my Section, a Squadron of 4th Hussars and Detachment Middlesex, doing escort to the Viceroy. We were asked to lunch and introduced to every one. Being in the R.H.A. I am senior to every one else there on this show. Lady Curzon is quite the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. The Viceroy and party have now gone out to do their shoot and come back just to see the Lungaur. I am sending a photograph of our L Battery Officers and N.C.O.'s.

'Our new Major[1] is simply a ripper. However, I can't stay long in the R.H.A. It is the finest branch in the Service; every year more is expected from the subaltern in it. I know my work, but I can't see well enough to do it, so it 's no good.'

'*April* 16.—I was down at Hyderabad on Good Friday and Easter Day. Good Friday we spent going down there, and Easter Day in Camp. I couldn't go to church as I wanted to, not being able to find out at what time or where it was.'

(The following refers to the article on Hyderabad from which the account of the Festival has been extracted. The article gives a very good account of Hyderabad, but it is beyond the scope of this Memoir.)

'*May* 22.—I had a letter from the Editor of *Wide World*, and he says it was refused because the photos. were not of first-class interest. I have been pretty busy all this week getting up an R.A. Concert in the open air, which came off yesterday. I am afraid it was not very good, there was too much wind. I had two Nigger Troupes in it from start to finish, and was "Corner" man in one and "Massa Johnson" in the last. And I also sang "Fancy Meeting You." I hope the wedding will go off well. I have written down the date in my Diary.'

'*May* 28.—Time is going by and I have plenty to do in one way and another; so much that I shall be here all the year, and will not go away except to go home. J. is commanding now for ten days, and then goes on two months'

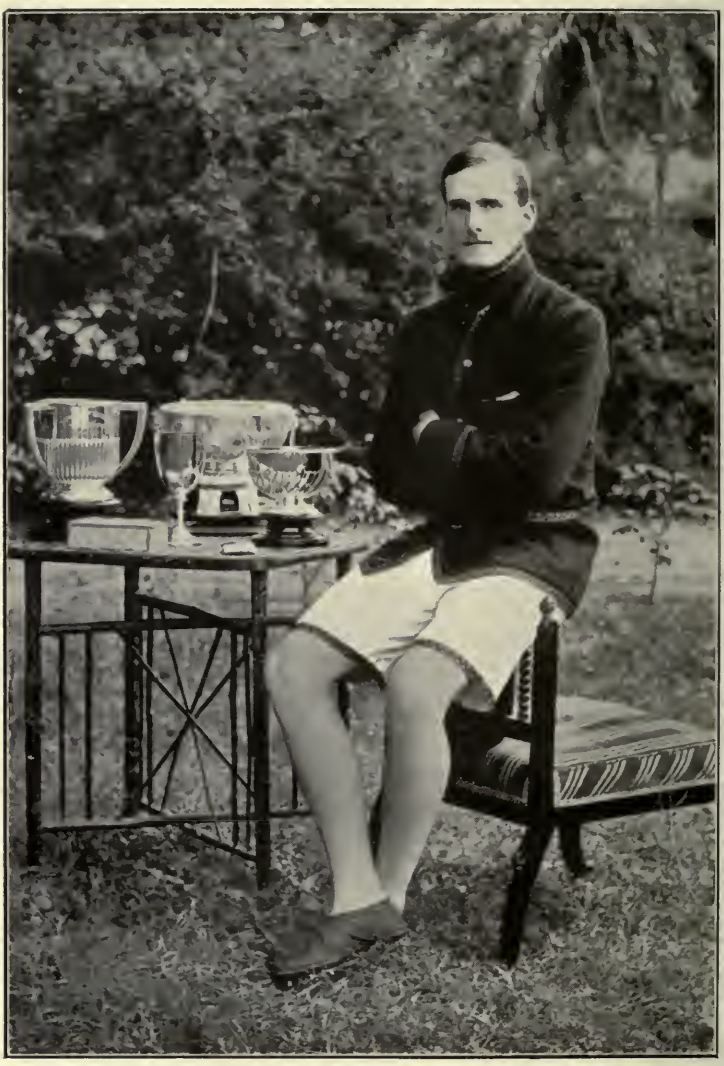
[1] Major (now Col.) Cloete.

FINALISTS IN R.A. MADRAS FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT, played at Secunderabad, 1902.

L BATTERY R.H.A. (Winners).
Lieut. Steel; *Gunners:* Montgomery, Brighouse, Jackson, Virtue, Lloyd, Howland, Burridge. *Drivers:* Spencer, Froude, Glyde.

55th BATTERY R.F.A.

Facing p. 16.



LIEUT. E. A. STEEL AT BOMBAY ATHLETIC MEETING, 1902.

Facing p. 17

leave, shooting, and I shall be here with the Major, which I like. I am having a very good time really, and getting to like the climate in a way. But I am not playing football twice a week—in fact, my doctor says it is not right—but I have a lot to do with the men. I have a Reconnaissance Class for a month, and I am generally getting up a concert or something.'

CHAPTER III

Festivities at Secunderabad, 1902—L Battery wins Football Cup—Bombay Athletic Meeting, many Successes—Secunderabad Tournament, best Man-at-Arms.

'*June* 19.—I am getting up a show in the theatre amongst the men for June 28, and am also responsible for the Coronation week, which I have arranged for Secunderabad society, and also trying to run the Fancy Dress Ball, which every one wants run in a different way.'

PROGRAMME OF FIXTURES FOR 23RD-28TH JUNE

Monday	WATER GYMKHANA: Boat Club.	DANCE, U.S. Club.
Tuesday	SEMI-FINAL POLO: R.A. 'At Home.' 4th Hussars Ground.	——
Wednesday	SKITTLE GYMKHANA, Secunderabad. Middlesex Regt. 'At Home.'	CALICO BALL, Central Gymnasium.
Thursday	FUTTEH MAIDAN GYMKHANA RACES.	——
Friday	FINAL POLO: 4th Hussars Ground. 4th Hussars 'At Home.'	FANCY DRESS BALL, U.S. Club.
Saturday	AMERICAN TENNIS TOURNAMENT, U.S. Club.	R.A. NIGGER MINSTREL ENTERTAINMENT.

'*July* 20.—Still very busy, in fact I shall be quite glad when all the festivity is over. We had our Fancy Dress Ball last night. Then I went down to the station to see the General's [1] and Milman's ponies off. They have left for Ooty this morning.

'Our Football Tournament comes on Sept. 1, so I must

[1] Sir G. T. Pretyman, K.C.M.G., C.B., Major-General, Colonel-Commandant Royal Artillery (deceased).

take that up now. Last year we went to Madras and were beaten in the Final. After all, I am having a good time, what with polo, driving the brake and tandem, and getting up different shows, though I feel I am wasting my time. The Barrs have come back from Ooty. He is now Sir David. The Viceroy is coming down to Mysore for the coronation of the Maharajah, and it is going to be a splendid show. He wants to have his proper escort, viz.: one Battery R.H.A. and one Regiment of Cavalry.

'There 's a dance at the Club this Saturday. The Battery are giving a dinner beforehand, Major Cloete, Capt. Greathead, and myself—Ramsden has not come back yet.'

'*Aug.* 21.—One certainly likes this country the more one stays, but it takes time to get used to it. Last Saturday the first of the R.A. Tournament was played. We played the 23rd and beat them. This afternoon we played the 49th and the Final in the first round. The Finals are to be played here this year. Our match had to be stopped on account of the rain, when the score was even. This should reach you in time for John's birthday, so please wish him very many happy returns of it for me. How nice to be at home for it!'

'*Sept.* 8.—Just a line to tell you we have won the Cup, but we had to play the 55th twice for it.

'Jocelyn has gone for three weeks' leave to Ooty. I don't know what he 'll do there. He falls in love with every girl that comes here, so I don't know what will be the result of his Ooty trip. Very light-hearted is J. He has got his jungle fever on again and has gone there to try and get rid of it.'

'*Sept.* 21.—I was awfully glad to hear John has got something good. I have been on regimental duty all this week, and so have not left the place all the week. I have the men out in the afternoon after stables. We are still practising Tug-of-War for the Assault-at-Arms. The Bombay Athletic Meeting comes off Oct. 27. I may go and compete in the Hurdles, Quarter Mile, and Long Jump.'

'*Oct.* 6.—The Assault-at-Arms has been on all this week.

I am sending you an *Indian Sporting Times* which contains photo. of my Team. I am trying to get fit for Bombay, but it 's very hard trying to play football and train for running, as a kick might knock you out at any moment.'

'*Oct.* 23.—Monday week the Assault-at-Arms starts, and I have been trying to train for that. I want to get Medal for best man-at-arms very badly ; shall be very glad when it 's all over and I can settle down. There is plenty on in the Battery, of course, too. I am going to sing in a concert at the Hyderabad Contingent to-morrow night.'

'*Oct.* 30.—I managed to go to Bombay on Saturday morning. I thought I had left it too late, but I managed to work off the train journey and arrive on Sunday morning. I had to put the men through a laying test on Friday afternoon which the Major wanted me to stop for, also a concert on Friday evening at the Hyderabad Contingent at home, at which I said I would sing, so I didn't start so soon as I intended. Of course, as you know, I have never done much in the way of running, except the Hurdles, which I have made a speciality of, though it 's 2½ years since I have done them. I was never better than 3rd in the Quarter Mile, though, as you know, I won a good Quarter Mile at Camberley once. However, I always thought I ought to be able to run a quarter of a mile, so I entered for these two events. It is an open meeting for all India and any one can enter. I should have looked stupid if I had come all the way to Bombay without doing anything, especially as every one knew I was going ; so it was with anything but confidence that I started off on Saturday morning.

'I arrived on Sunday morning, looked about for an hotel, changed into running clothes and went on my bicycle to the ground. Luckily for me, a train journey does me no harm. I tried the hurdles, which were beautiful, and a lovely field of turf—got my stride and start, etc.—had a good look at the Quarter-Mile Course and returned to breakfast. Of course, at that time—9 A.M.—no one is out taking exercise, so I had the ground to myself. At 3.30 the Sports began, and the Hurdles were 3rd Race. I lined up, fairly

confident of not being far behind. As the pistol went off I got a good start and got going at once, and was never touched by any one. My time was 16 seconds. I was surprised, though I knew I must have done it pretty quickly. After that I felt satisfied that I should win the Quarter Mile too, which was nearly last. So I didn't enjoy the Sports a bit while waiting; I had been told the winner of the Quarter Mile was an R.A.M.C. man who was supposed to be good. I had a bad place at the outside, and as there was a corner just after the start which I wanted to reach first or second I thought I was out of it. However, I remained second half the way round, and won fairly easily in 14⅘ seconds—the best I have ever done it in. I could have won the Long Jump too; but as it came just before the Quarter Mile I didn't go for it. Now came a great fix. I was going to leave on Monday night, so as to be playing for the Battery on Wednesday. Secondly, there was a dance on Tuesday for which I had booked my whole programme. On the other hand, I had been asked to stop one day more, so as to go in for the 100 yds. and Half Mile, which they all told me I would win. I didn't think so, as they are not my races, but I particularly wanted to stop to see Captain Angelo and a number of friends I had met, so I stopped on. On the Tuesday I won the 100 yds. Race and also the Half Mile, and when I had done I felt rather a beast for not letting any one else win. I got six Cups altogether—one for each race and two large Challenge Cups which I keep for a year.'

'*Nov.* 12.—It has taken a long time to tell you that I went to Bombay and won four races. Our Goal-keeper is still with fever in hospital, but I want to see them through the Tournament and get them another Cup and Medal, then I shall settle down to work. I feel as if I had had a month's leave.

'I told you we stood three to two for the best man-at-arms. Last Friday morning it was Sword versus Sword mounted, and after a good fight I won. That made us three-all, and I had Tent-Pegging and Jumping to do. I didn't win the Tent-Pegging, and on Saturday my last

chance came. I rode Nero of J.'s, but he is no good for Riding-School Jumping, as he jumps too big, so I didn't win that either, and this was the last event. Then a Committee Meeting was held in which they told me the state of affairs and asked how we would like to fight it out. Well, we couldn't come to any agreement, so I said I would leave it to the Committee ; so after a bit I was informed we were to fight it out at once, as it was the last day and the prizes had to be given away. Bayonet dismounted, the lance mounted. I of course had the lance ; now this was an event he had won in the first round, so that it either meant showing the white flag or being beaten before the whole crowd. Being the Final there was a great assembly. We were going to do a galloping drive. There was a Gymnastic Display and other show events to finish up with. This all took place on the Middlesex Football Ground. We entered the arena and it didn't last long, for I went for him and knocked him out with three points running and so was declared winner and consequently best man-at-arms. Every one was very pleased, except of course a few ; but, after all, it wasn't a fair test on paper.'

'*Nov.* 20.—Miss Stephens' wedding to-day to Major Conran. Major Cloete, Ramsden, and I drove her back. I am sending you a photo this week, they put it in the *Indian Sporting Times*. I go on December 8 to Bolarum for the Practice Camp on the 22nd. Our new Colonel is to be Col. Philpotts, who arrives about December 1. We haven't had a Colonel now since March.'

CHAPTER IV

Leave to England—Military Tournament—Sports at Aldershot—Presentation to King—Range-finding Model—Return to Secunderabad—Autumn Manœuvres—Bombay Athletic Meeting—Football Accident—Ordered Home—King Edward VII. Hospital—Scotland—Fit for General Service.

1903

'*Jan.* 17.—I am very down in my luck again; one of my best friends here, Cameron, who only just came out I.M.S., three months' service, has just gone to Somaliland; it 's very sickening seeing all one's friends go off on Active Service and not getting a chance oneself.'

By February 12 the Inspections were over, but the time passed furiously. The Burlesque, of which mention has been made, came to an end on March 8, and wound up with a dance at 12th Middlesex Lines, then Battery Sports and a Football Match with the Middlesex in the Secunderabad Tournament, followed by Lincoln Sports on March 9 in which he won the Officers' Race, and he left for Bombay and sailed in the *Rubattino* on April 15.

A retrospect of his life and occupation since his arrival in India, 1901, might well have given him cause for satisfaction. He had occupied his short leave in 1901 by a trip to Southern India and thence to Kashmir; returning to Trimulgherry, he had coached his Battery Team at football and led them into the Final for the Cup, and though beaten in the Final at Madras, it was matter for congratulation that his team had done so well. He had been commended at the Manœuvres in February 1902 for the handling of his Section. On February 20 he had made his mark in the Assault-at-Arms. During May, June, and July he was in the thick of several social events, getting up minstrels,

a nigger troupe, a fancy-dress ball, and again in August coaching up his team for the Football Tournament, which this time he led to victory, winning the Cup on September 11. On October 27 he had carried all before him at the Bombay Athletic Meeting, winning six prizes, two of which were Challenge Cups, and later at the Secunderabad Assault-at-Arms he was 'best man-at-arms.'

In short, he had been more than fairly successful in everything he had undertaken, he had made many friends and was under a C.O. for whom he entertained an affectionate regard. In all his letters home telling of these events (and he never missed a mail) there was no suspicion of vainglory or boasting; the one note throughout the correspondence was the pleasure that he hoped this recital would give to us at home, and especially to his brother and sister; but there is a note of sadness in his last letter home in which he wrote: 'I am leaving this country without any regret; it has taught me a lot, I 'm twice what I was before, but at great cost; it is a snare and delusion.' This seems inconsistent with the summary just made out and requires explanation.

He certainly had more than his share of bad luck in the loss of his horses, his failure to pass his exam. in Hindustani, and his anxiety as to his future, which crops up all through the correspondence, but at that age these were comparatively minor matters and might well have been considered as dust in the balance compared with the amount of work and play that his untiring energy had placed to his credit.

The summer of 1903 passed quickly; the Military Tournament was coming on at Olympia, and, fresh from his success at Secunderabad, he entered for most of the events, but here he found himself in better company—the pick of the British Services—and though he worked his way up to some of the semi-finals he did not win any event. Later on he entered for the Aldershot Athletic Sports in August, and here he was more successful with fencing and sabres, but in his own speciality—hurdles—in which he had never

been beaten since his schooldays, he won his heat, but was just beaten in the Final owing to want of condition.

In September 1903 Lt. Steel started on his return journey to India.

'S.S. *Orotava*.—We haven't had a bad time, though the train journey was pretty bad. But having Macredy and Newman [1] made all the difference. We had rather fun at Marseilles.'

'*Sept.* 25.—Arrived at Colombo. Have had a splendid time. The Firmingers [2] met me and took me out to their beautiful place. I have been with them since Monday at Welikadi.'

Lt. Steel arrived at Trimulgherry, October 1, after a long and tedious journey. On October 20 he went to Bombay to the Races and Sports. It will be remembered that he had in the previous year come off with flying colours and two Challenge Cups which he had either to give up or contest, and though he did not expect to do so well he felt bound to go. Considering the circumstances he did remarkably well, but he may tell his own tale.

'*Oct.* 29.—I have just arrived back from Bombay, and though I didn't do as well as last year I am fairly satisfied. I only won the Quarter and Half Mile and ought to have won the Hurdles, but the Starter's pistol went off before I had even got down, so I never even started, and I was beaten in the 100 yds.'

During his stay in England in the summer of 1903 he deposited in the War Office a working model of a range-finder to which frequent reference is made in subsequent correspondence. On his way out he wrote: 'I hope you have been able to manage something about the description

[1] These were two gentlemen, actors in a play called *Potash and Perlmutter*, which had a long run in New York and also in London, and Mr. Steel said it was the best play he had ever seen.

[2] Major Firminger, an officer serving under the Colonial Department, at that time in charge of the Jail. Mrs. Firminger (*née* Ravenshaw) was a relation.

of the two instruments waiting to be inspected.' It seems that some further description was called for, and on October 15, 1903, he wrote: 'My inventions do not want any drawings as I have had a model made instead.' However, it seems that Major Headlam, D.S.O., required some further drawing, and on November 19 Lt. Steel wrote: 'I send home a drawing as well; I hope to have it out here by February, as General Hepburn wants me to come and work it at Bangalore for General Parsons to see.' In April 1904 he wrote: 'The instruments arrived safely, though the War Office have not done anything about it beyond sending their thanks: the new pattern instrument is apparently to be exactly similar to mine. I use them out here, and General Hepburn was very pleased with them and they were most successful.'

'*Nov.* 15.—I have had a very nice letter from General Hay telling me my name is down for K.A.R. I want to know if I ought to apply here through my C.O. at once. The Battery should come any time from November next, and the following February—I wonder where I shall be then. We go out for Manœuvres on January 11. The Major is an Umpire, so it 's splendid for J. and myself, we each have a separate command.'

'*Dec.* 10.—The Assault-at-Arms is over, but I had to confine myself mostly to judging. What with having just come back from Camp and having to use our own horses I couldn't win anything. Both my Major and J. are laid up for a few days. Ramsden is away and Duprés has left to join the Staff College.

'We gave a very good dance last Wednesday. Xmas here will come and go as if nothing had happened.'

'*Dec.* 24.—I am working pretty hard now at Hindustani, and have not been out anywhere for three weeks. J. has gone out for a shoot, but the Major's wife is ill now, so he can't go.'

1904

'*Jan.* 1.—I have been awfully busy this week—something on every day. I have also *The Girl from Kay's* on my hands. I wish I had seen it a few more times. Wasn't it nice of Mr. Edwardes? Any one else would have made us pay £20 for it. We go out to Manœuvres next Monday —at least I do with my section, all alone.'

'*Jan.* 28.—I got back from Manœuvres last Saturday, having been out exactly a fortnight. You will be glad to hear I have passed my Hindustani Exam., I heard about it while I was away. The Barrs are leaving here for England, April 2. Our General, Pretyman, goes to command the Madras Presidency.'

'*Feb.* 4.—I have been out a good bit this week. I have been amusing the parties with patter nonsense and comic songs when it's too dark for tennis. . . . The regatta comes off next week. I am rowing in the double sculls with Allan Ross.'

'*Feb.* 18.—The regatta is over. We were beaten by a length.'

The Football Tournament in March was the only serious thing he had to look forward to, and now the blow came that not only dashed all his hopes but threatened to end his mortal career.

On March 10 he wrote: 'A busy week with the Football Team. You will be glad to hear that "L" is left in for the Final against Middlesex and I shall have to play up for all I am worth.' In the match he got a kick on the knee about twenty minutes after the start and a severe blow on the thigh which nearly knocked him out, and caused them to lose the match. It was no time for giving in. J. and Ramsden were going off on leave, the Major's wife was ill and going home, so he was practically alone. A touch of fever laid him up, and in April he had to go on the sick list, where he was kept for the first fortnight of April having his knee blistered, and he returned to duty with his

knee somewhat improved but with his leg so stiff that he could not bear it. Still, he struggled on, though, as he wrote, having to ride with a straight leg. Fortunately it was his right leg, so he did not require to use it for mounting.

There is something pathetic in the lonely figure struck down at the moment of victory, indomitably struggling to do his duty in the face of such odds. There are many, no doubt, who regard football as a rough game and unfit for decent folk, and would even say that it was all his own fault. But there is much to be said, on the other hand, for a young soldier who takes an interest in his men and can influence them and set them an example as a leader; it is true that in a recently quoted letter he remarked, when in lower spirits than usual, that he thought they were not very grateful for all the trouble and expense he was going to about it, but after all, who thinks of or expects gratitude? 'Where are the nine?' is a question that has been repeated through the ages, and it is perhaps more apparent than real, for I feel sure that no survivor of that team, if such there be, could read this chapter without emotion.

He came off the sick list on April 21; however, by the end of April he could carry on no longer, and had to go to the Station Hospital, and after much consultation the doctors came to the conclusion that the injury to his thigh was beyond their ken.

At this stage Major Cloete, seeing the incapacity of those in medical charge of him either to diagnose the injury or to suggest any remedy, took the matter in his own hands and insisted on Lt. Steel being sent home at once, and a passage was taken for him on the *Assaye* on May 24; but for the interest taken in his case by Major Cloete and his opportune interference the result might have been much more serious.

Leaving Bombay May 24 he arrived at Southampton June 14 after a very pleasant voyage and with his leg feeling very much better.

On his arrival he was taken to 9 Grosvenor Gardens and placed under the care of Sister Agnes. And here let

me pay a humble tribute to this noble woman, the founder of the King Edward VII. Hospital for Officers, who has devoted her life and fortune to the care of the sick and wounded of both Services, and for whom no honour that any earthly power could bestow would be an adequate reward. Here his injury, an enlargement of the thigh bone, was seriously examined and watched by several of the most distinguished surgeons in London, who were at that time giving their aid gratuitously to Sister Agnes.[1] Several examinations under X-rays were made to assist in the diagnosis, but without any decision being arrived at. The discussion, revealed later by Sister Agnes, took the form of a suggestion to amputate his leg. This was fortunately negatived by a decision of the majority, and he was advised to go away into the country and take as much walking exercise as he could without excessive fatigue.

Accordingly, he went to Scotland and stayed during August with his cousin, Kenneth Angelo, who had a beautiful place at Cullarchy, near Fort Augustus, where he had some shooting and deer-stalking and met Sir W. Grantham, Sir Forrest Fulton, and other interesting people. Perhaps the only thing he 'missed' was the absence of music.

On his return from Scotland he paid a visit to the Irwins at Lynehow, and later to his uncle, Colonel Westmorland, at Yanwath near Penrith.

At the end of August he was summoned to appear before a Medical Board, and with this remarkable result, that his examination disclosed no trace of the injury for which he had barely escaped the surgeon's knife, and he was pronounced sound in wind and limb.

Before leaving home in September 1903 he put his name

[1] In the *Memoirs* of Edward, 8th Earl of Sandwich: 'During the Boer War my friends Frances and Agnes Keyser turned their house in Grosvenor Crescent into a hospital for sick and wounded officers, and invited me to assist them in their work. Their success was complete. So devotedly attached to her work was Agnes that she assumed the name of 'Sister Agnes,' and later on founded the hospital called Edward VII. in Grosvenor Gardens, in which, as Matron, she devoted her life, and which continues to this day.'

down for service under the Colonial Department. The reason for this has been foreshadowed in some of the letters already quoted, and they may be conveniently summarised. First, he had come to the conclusion that his eyesight was not good enough for him to remain in H.A., and, moreover, he was anxious to see service, and he felt satisfied that he could not expect to do this if he remained, as they were kept in India principally for show work and for exercising with other arms. Nearly all his contemporaries had seen service, and he felt, as it were, out of it; again, the life he wished to lead in the H.A. was (he was beginning to discover) more expensive than he could afford. He was in no sense extravagant, had no expensive tastes or habits, never played at cards for stakes, but the perpetual gaieties of a large Indian station—and H.A. is always at a large station—taking about his football team to play whenever it became necessary if they were to distinguish themselves, or even maintain the position that he had helped them to, was expensive and might lead him into debt. He had thought over and discussed various alternatives, as we have seen.

Entry into the Staff Corps (for which he was qualifying himself by studying for the exam. in Hindustani) and the various openings resulting therefrom had all been considered, but these occupations required permanent service in India, and for this he could not make up his mind so far to come to a decision. Service under the Colonial Department, though it held out no such hope of preferment or pension as permanent Indian service, did not necessitate the severance of the link with home and all it meant to him, and it was in this frame of mind that he left home in September 1903. Knowing how proud he was of his Battery, which he thought the best in India, it is not difficult to understand the reluctance with which he came to this conclusion, especially as the impression prevailed at that time that they would return home on the expiry of their term of service, *i.e.* any time between November 1904 and the following February.

It will be seen later on that this hope was dashed to the ground by an order that they were to remain in India, but this was not then known, and his ambition was to return home with the Battery before making the final plunge which not only severed him from that arm of the Service but possibly decided his future career; and it was therefore after much consideration that he decided to sever his connection with the Horse Artillery and applied to the Colonial Department to be employed in Africa when a convenient opportunity should arise. This opportunity now presented itself, and he accepted the offer of service.

CHAPTER V

Seconded for Service under Colonial Office—Departure for Nigeria —Staff Officer under Major Trenchard—1905, Trip to Lokoja—Eket —Return to Calabar—Cross River—Further Expedition—Leave to England.

THE Gazette seconding him for service under the Colonial Office was dated October 21, but he had in the meantime made preparations for his departure, and leaving Liverpool on the 8th arrived at Calabar October 28 on the British and African S. N. Co. s.s. *Sokoto*. 'The passengers,' he writes, 'are a very down-hearted lot, and talk of the East Coast in bated breath, and are sure each tour is their last.' He had intended ever since his return from India to publish a 'Primer' for officers or others learning Hindustani; he had been struck with the inefficiency of existing books for that purpose while himself trying to overcome the difficulties of the language, and he had made voluminous notes both in Hindustani and Persian with that object, and thinking to work this up on the voyage to Calabar, but unfortunately he could only find the Persian notebook in his baggage, and the other with the Hindustani notes, which he had left behind, was mislaid and never recovered (see p. 37).

Lt. Steel's arrival at Calabar is thus chronicled by himself :—

'THE BARRACKS, CALABAR,
'*November* 1, 1904.

'DEAREST MOTHER AND FATHER,—I arrived here last Friday, the 28th, so the journey took us exactly 20 days. It was horrid weather from Lagos to Forcados, Bonny, and Calabar, very wet and misty; but as soon as we got away from the Niger Delta to the mouth of the Cross River it

OFFICERS OF NIGERIA REGIMENT.

Left to right: Standing—Lieut. Steel; Sergt. Battersby; Lieut. Gibbon; Lieut. Corry Smith; Lieut. Colley; Sergt. Cousins; Sergt. Anderson; Sergt. Angus; Band-Sergt. Sheppard; Lieut. Halfpenny; Lieut. Kirkby; Sergt. Pritchard; Sergt. Stevenson. *Sitting*—Lieut. Gepp; Sergt. ——; Sergt. Goodwin; Capt. Mair; Major Trenchard; Col. Montanaro, C.B.; Lieut. Williams; Capt. Margesson; Mr. Ainslie. *In front*—Lieut. Irvine; Lieut. Fox; Lieut. Vickery; Capt. Carlton.

Facing p. 32.

ARTILLERY OF NIGERIA REGIMENT.

Facing p. 33.

became tropical again. The approach to Calabar is very pretty, it is some miles up the Cross River—a fine big stream —and the steamers go right up. The country is densely wooded on both sides and luxuriant with vegetation. As to Calabar itself, I am charmed with it. Of course, there aren't the festivities of an Indian station, because in the first place the space is so limited, and there are no ladies, except the hospital nurses, and of course no horse-flesh. All the European community is on a good-sized hill with plateau, and lovely and open. It is well laid out, with good roads and drains and everything nice and green, and every one is near each other, not like Secunderabad. I suppose after a bit one is bored by the monotony of the life, if you don't have any fighting to relieve it. But so far I 've been too busy to think of anything. It is quite healthy if you know how to take care of yourself, and no insect life hardly. One of the Europeans in a "factory" (shop) here goes home in the *Aro* with "Blackwater" to-morrow, but I don't know how he got it. We are very short-handed indeed. Mair, the O.C., R.A., is away on leave (home) and Hamilton is C.R.A. now, and I 'm next. He goes off this afternoon on a "Column." I have had some splendid tennis here, and that 's all. It 's dark at 6 P.M., and from 6 to 7 we meet in the different Messes for "drinks" and "buck," and at 7 P.M. change for dinner at 7.30, which is nice, as one can get to bed early. It is much more civilised here than I thought, though of course the Native is far behind the Native of India in every way. A "Babu" clerk from India would be invaluable, and I must say the soldier of India is a different class of article altogether. At Bonny, I think I told you, we just missed "Carlton," who had gone up the Niger Delta with a column to punish some tribe. A telegram came yesterday to say he 'd had a "fight," and amongst other casualties had lost a white Sergeant, killed, which is rather a serious matter, and he wanted another gun sent up, so Hamilton has had to go off at a day's notice with his detachment and reinforcements to him instead of going off next week with Major

Trenchard's column, which is going to have a big task. The difficulty now is that there 's hardly any one left here, except two guns and myself and Gibbon, R.A., and a "depot" (Infantry) which I am to take over next week as every one else is going with Major Trenchard (next week). I have got a "hint" that I may have to go with Major T. as Staff Officer to his column, if it is not cancelled, and take a gun as well, which would be all right ; but it 's not at all certain yet. In a day or two I shall know, and if I go, it will be long before next mail day.

'I have been living rather Bush fashion. There are no quarters for me and so I use all my camp kit. The Mess here is rather scanty, and we have only two meals, luncheon at 11 A.M. and dinner at 7.30 P.M., and at any other time you can't get anything except drinks, so you have to arrange for your own breakfast and tea.

'One column with Major Moorhouse (commanding) on its way to "Asaba" (Niger River) is going to "Abushi" and working right across to Akataka on the Cross River. (This is quite an unknown part and they should have some good fighting.) Carlton has gone with his company to Degama (Niger Delta), and is clearing the country between that and Omoku to the north ; and Major Trenchard's column goes to "Ikpa" on the Cross River (near here) and on to "Aka," the centre of "Juju" worship, and then will work up north and try and meet Major Moorhouse. This is a terrible wild country, and forty miles from here cannibals live in peace. I am very glad I brought a bicycle here.'

The surmise was correct, and he was appointed Staff Officer to Major Trenchard, and on November 26 started on the expedition foreshadowed in the foregoing letter.

'*December* 10, 1904.

'I have been lucky enough to drop into this billet as Artillery Officer and Staff Officer to Major Trenchard Commanding No. 2 Column, and we leave the day after to-morrow and don't get back till April.'

'Camp 10 m. S.W. Itu, *December* 26, 1904.

'This morning I was off at 3 A.M. on a reconnaissance with a column of my own and got back at 2 P.M. We all move off to-morrow for a five-days' show without camping. I got to within 3 m. of Aka this morning, which is our destination. We have only had one man killed so far and one Sergeant wounded. I am very fit; being Senior Subaltern I get 3 Sections and a Mission. I think I ought to get through, but of course in the Bush you never know who is going to get it next.'

The operation known as the Ibibiokwa Patrol had for its object the establishment of law and order in a district not hitherto dealt with, and the surrender of arms, the suppression of human sacrifice and illicit trade. Considerable opposition was met with during January and February, but much useful work was done and a large portion of hitherto unknown country mapped. The arrangements were somewhat modified owing to the murder of Dr. Stewart and subsequent general rising in the district where it occurred. The force returned to Calabar in March 1903, and arrangements were planned for completing the work in the following season.

1905

'Calabar, *March* 9, 1905.

'. . . Back at Calabar safe and sound again. We arrived on Tuesday last in the *Jackdaw*. No more column news to what you heard in the last. We marched into Ikotchpene from Ndiakata, left A. C. at Ikotchpene, sent "G" Co. up to Bendi, and marched to Itu, where the *Jackdaw* picked us up and brought us here. Calabar looked very pretty. It 's a lovely spot really. I am out at the New Barracks you remember the Colonel was telling you about; about a mile back from Calabar on high ground. Only the white N.C.O.'s quarters are ready so far, which the Officers occupy. All the Gunners are out here and Depot,

and we are entirely employed on clearing the ground—parade ground, cricket and tennis grounds, etc. There is a small railway that brings everything here from Calabar; and they will be the finest Barracks in the world; beautiful native huts too, and polo ground. A best pony from N. Nigeria costs £12 and you get 2s. 6d. a day for keeping him. In India the same pony costs 700 Rs., and you don't get *anything* for keeping him and only 1s. a day for your charger. It will be a year before they are finished. I am directing everything here for the Colonel, who comes out most days. Mair, our Captain, is out, so I 'm no longer Captain, and Vickery is out. He and Gibbon go off the day after to-morrow on another expedition (or patrol rather) north of Afikpo for two months. I forgot to tell you we had a white Colour-Sergeant and two men wounded two days before we left Ikatekpene. Mair lives at the Prison, which he is running temporarily. . . . I am very fit, and think it was the best thing I ever did to come out here. . . .'

'Calabar, *March* 21, 1905.

'. . . I am back in the old Barracks now, and go out to the New Barracks twice a day, as on account of more N.C.O.'s coming there wasn't room there. The Gunners H Co. and Depot men are all out there and do fatigues, clearing the bush, etc., and levelling. At present I 'm very busy superintending the making of the terraces and gardens in front of the Mess. The Mess is nearly finished and two Bungalows and the N.C.O.'s quarters and soldiers' huts, but we Officers shan't go out till there is room for us. It will be very fine indeed. There have been a tremendous lot of us here lately and dining in Mess. Last Saturday we said "Good-bye" to another column for the Cross River, where there is more trouble. Major Moorhouse's and Capt. Horsley's column return next week, and so we shall be full up again. Last Saturday we played cricket, the Force against the World, to try and avenge a former defeat. They made 145 and we had 2½ hours to beat them and made it.

'Major Trenchard is very busy putting everything straight. He runs this place, and I get on very well with him and also the Colonel. . . .

'The Amalgamation scheme has been decided on between S. Nigeria and Lagos, but no details. Our Artillery has been cut down to one Battery of six B.L. guns instead of two Batteries each of four guns, one Battery being B.L. and the other R.M.L. The latter have been sent to the Governor's house as ornaments and two more B.L. guns ordered from home. At present it is not decided whether the whole Battery will stop in Calabar, or a section at Lagos or Asaba. No one wants to go to Lagos, you don't come out here to spend more than your pay.

'Captain Mair[1] arrived last mail. A very nice fellow. I should like to get Jocelyn out here instead of sticking with L. I see they come home for certain now this Christmas. . . . I shall try and stop out here till next winter's "operations" and come home April next. If all goes well I may come out for a second time. I shall look forward to coming back to it again now more than before, now that prospects seem brighter.

'The only place I can locate that Hindustani book of mine is with young Brandon. I wonder if he took it. I suppose he is back in India now' (see p. 32).

'*April* 20, 1905.

'I am sorry I did not bring all my books, as I require them to work up for my exam., for which the Colonel wants me to go up at Lokoja, but it can't be helped.

'We are in the midst of the Rifle meeting—fearful panic. Even the billiard table is being slept on, there is such a crowd. The next boat, however, sees a great clearance, thank goodness, and when I come back from Lokoja it will be peaceful again and one will be able to get some food at meals.'

May 6, 1905.—*En route* to Lokoja to pass his examination referred to in letter of April 20.

[1] Now Colonel G. Mair, C.M.G., D.S.O., R.A., commanding the Nigeria Regiment.

'It seems quite strange being on board ship and not going home. I am getting off at Forcados to-morrow and get into a river boat for Asaba and then to Lokoja. It will be sad saying "Good-bye" to the others who are going home in this boat (among them Trenchard and Hamilton). However, it is a change after Calabar. The Colonel and Horsley his adjutant are coming up with me as far as Asaba inspecting. So we are quite a cheery party.

'. . . is coming home on this boat. I don't suppose he 's got a good word to say about any of his senior officers. Major T. is only disliked by the worst as he makes them work. I don't know what Calabar would do without him, for he keeps everything up to the top standard; on a column after three months' overtime every one is inclined to be irritable, but he 's the best we have got out here. I only hope he comes back.

'We had a good week of festivities at Calabar and ended up with a Smoker and Torch-light Tattoo. Two civilians, Bedwell and Orpen, won the lawn tennis. The boat is beginning to roll horribly.'

He arrived at Lokoja May 6, passed his exam. on May 29, and returned to Calabar.

'Calabar, *June* 14, 1905.

'Quite a change after Lokoja this place, something different every afternoon. I was disappointed with Lokoja. I have been offered a political job in charge of the "Eket" district. You see Eket on the map I sent you, and the district goes up to Aka and is bounded by the Calabar and Kwalbo Rivers. I have accepted it for a short time, as there 's not much going on here, as it may do me good for future events perhaps. It will be interesting visiting some of the old places again—Afaha, Offiong, and those other places I have mentioned—though I hope they won't bear any ill-will against me. You remember we had to settle a good bit of the country this year.'

'EKET, *July* 25, 1905.

'I have just heard the terribly sad news of Jocelyn's [1] death. I can hardly realise it. I don't know what to say to poor Aunt Flo. I have had quite a good time the last fortnight travelling about the District, but have no time now to tell you all the episodes. It is very nice being free as it were to do as one likes. I am off again to-morrow down the Kwalbo River to the mouth, where there is a creek that is supposed to run to the Calabar River inland, and I am going to see how far I can get, as there is a great scheme for opening up water communication that way with Eket or Calabar.'

'EKET, *August* 21, 1905.

'I return to Calabar this week, as my relief arrives the day after to-morrow. I have had too much to do here, or rather have done too much, for I needn't have done anything but sit tight if I liked. I have now about ten reports to write as a result of my labours.'

'CALABAR, *September* 9, 1905.

'I got back last week. I was not sorry to reach Calabar again, I have had very hard work at Eket.'

'*September* 20, 1905.

'Trenchard and others arrived last boat. He is in great form, and at last something is being done. He has asked me to stay out here and come as his Staff Officer on the next operations, which begin in November. He will be in Supreme Command with four or five other columns under him, so instead of leaving here next month when my year 's up I am going to stay till April or May next, supposing the doctors allow it, which is almost certain.'

'CROSS RIVER, *September* 30, 1905.

'Came out here in the *Jackdaw* and remained for gun

[1] Jocelyn Mellor (see p. 8) died June 7, 1905, after being severely mauled by a wounded tiger. He had just been promoted Captain and appointed to 113th Battery R.F.A. This was his last shikar trip preparatory to his proceeding to his station.

practice till October 18. Only Mair and I with the Battery. Vickery is doing Intelligence Officer.'

'AFIKPO, CROSS RIVER,
'*September* 30, 1905.

'We have been here three days now, which have been spent in clearing the grass in places for targets, etc. We took two days getting up in the *Jackdaw*, putting up at Itu for the first night, where you will remember we landed with the expedition. After that the river gets very pretty, being more open, and trees alongside instead of dense mangrove. This place is 4½ miles in from Endibo beach and "up" the whole way. Afikpo station is right up on a hill, with precipices on three sides which look over beautiful green plains for miles, and perfect climate.'

'CALABAR, *November* 2, 1905.

'All our arrangements stand at present and we start off November 13 from here. We have just sent reinforcements round to the Niger as the Kwali country is "up," and three Officers have just been badly wounded there. It was in Reuter's telegram about ten days ago. The H.M.S. *Dwarf* has been in, and we 've had a series of matches and festivities for them.'

The next four months were passed with the column. (Despatches twice and medal with two clasps.)

His letters during this period with the column were of exceptional interest to his family and friends, but they are similar in detail to that described in the previous expedition and would seem like repetition to the general reader; they have been absorbed into the history of the period and in that way generally described, and as to the part played in it by Lt. Steel, it will be sufficient to quote the dictum of Major Trenchard,[1] who, writing in 1919, said:

[1] Now Air-Marshal Sir Hugh Montague Trenchard, Bart., K.C.B., D.S.O., R.A.F., Chief of Air Staff. W.A.F.F. 1906-13, European War 1914-18, Commandant Central Flying School 1914-18.

'He was my Staff Officer and he was a great man and the most energetic I have ever seen, I think, and he was really the backbone of the expedition on which we were together.'

1906

'*Jan.* 13.—The Secretary of State has wired out to-day all overdue officers are to come home at once, so I may have to go at any time.'

'*Jan.* 22.—I got the Colonel to let Trenchard have me for an extra fortnight. We have not caught any of the murderers yet.'

Calabar.—On February 22 he wrote: 'I arrived here two days ago with the remains of Dr. Stewart (see p. 35), which we recovered, and one or two of the culprits. The funeral took place yesterday with great ceremony.'

CHAPTER VI

Return to England—School of Musketry, Hythe—Survey Course at Southampton—Return to Nigeria—Life and Work at Lagos—Blackwater Fever—Return Home—Lecture to Royal Geographical Society—Gazetted Captain—Joins 68th Battery, R.F.A., Woolwich—Trawsfynnid—Gravesend—Lecture at Geographical Institute, Newcastle—Christmas.

In March 1906 Lt. Steel embarked on his return home in s.s. *Nigeria*, and on arriving at Las Palmas encountered H.M.S. *Isis* in which his elder brother was First Lieut.; he remained with him a week, went on to Madeira, where he took the next boat home, arriving in the middle of April.

After a rest he set to work to prepare for his examination as Major; he also went through a course of Musketry at Hythe, where he obtained a certificate in July, and also a course of instruction in the ·303 Maxim machine-gun, for which he obtained a certificate.

In August 1906 he paid another visit to his uncle, Col. Westmorland, at Yanwath, and with his cousin, Hilda W. (now Mrs. C. T. Stockwell), attended the L.T. Tournament at Carlisle, August 27-30.

In October and November he attended the topographical course of instruction with the Ordnance Survey at Southampton, where he obtained a certificate from Col. Hellard, R.E.

1907

On January 12, 1907, Lt. Steel started in the s.s. *Aro* from Liverpool. He had three very bad days of seasickness, and was unable to land at Madeira as he had hoped. Altogether, the voyage was so monotonous that it left no impressions worthy of record.

'Lagos, *February* 4, 1907.

'I was ordered off here on arrival at Lagos roads, and shall be here till July, when I shall probably rejoin the gunners at Calabar. I was rather pleased with Lagos on first arrival, but ever since the first day I, in common with the general community, have not felt fit a single day. It is a most depressing place, being in a small low island, most of it reclaimed and sinking gradually and surrounded by a smelling lagoon. Having sunk such a lot of money into it and built a railway from the mainland to Ibadan and so on, I suppose the H.C. felt it had become the capital of the new province. It is more like an Indian native town in parts, and an enormous black population all on top of one another. To make matters worse, there is no water supply, and so all liquid refreshment has to be imported; a good water supply would cost millions. When you write to John you might tell him that I have a friend, Max Ritter, on the *Isis* whom he might keep an eye on, if he is worth it. I have got here without breaking or missing a single thing, rather good when you have to tranship into surf boats to the branch boat at Lagos roads and then cross the bar. I don't think there will be any football here. I don't even feel keen on it. Whether it's the food or the climate, I 've never been in such a comatose state in my life, though there is more society here, and a grand Marina to walk along.'

'*February* 14, 1907.

'We play polo twice a week and tennis the remainder. The polo is a godsend, I don't know what we would do in a climate like this without it. The railway people, who form a colony just opposite this island, are giving a dance to-night, to which I am going. There is a huge colony of nondescript people, French, German, and Syrian traders and their wives, mostly coloured. We have a rotten Mess here, not a patch on Calabar. I have a room 10′ × 15′ along a corridor where all boys have to pass to get to other rooms. If Trenchard had been here such a house would never have been put up, but every one else is too slack to worry.'

'Force Mess, Lagos, S. Nigeria,
'*February* 25, 1907.

'I am very busy, and the climate is sweltering. I haven't really slept since I arrived. You lie surrounded by mosquito nets in a sort of pool of perspiration, until from sheer weakness you slide into a state of lethargy and welcome the dawn to get up and have a bath.

'There is a lot to be done here—tennis-court to make and get ready for the annual match at polo with Accra, who come April 2 to play us. I shall be playing.'

'Lagos, *March* 3, 1907.

'I am running the Mess, and the accounts and Mess bills take some time, to say nothing of returns, etc. The Colonel leaves the middle of this month, and I am getting up the concert part for a farewell smoker and torch-light tattoo he 's giving.'

'Lagos, *March* 11, 1907.

'I hardly know which way to turn for work. I've had to get off for this mail two estimates for soda-water factories—one for Calabar and one for here. As nothing of this sort has ever been done here before, and there has been no water, it has been a big business, especially as all the water has to be filtered and boiled. It is most depressing weather for working, but plenty of exercise is the thing. On Saturday we played the first football match ever played in Lagos versus the Merchants, whom we beat rather easily. Needless to say, I had to arrange everything.'

'Lagos, *March* 18, 1907.

'Dr. Gordon White, who was on the first Ibibio expedition with Trenchard and me, died last week of malarial meningitis ; he was a good fellow.

'The Colonel leaves us to-morrow, and I have had several things to get settled up with him before he goes. Last Saturday we gave a smoker and torch-light tattoo as a farewell. The former took me all my time, and we had

electric light for all the stages and illuminations, and as I did most of the performance as well, I 'm glad it 's over.

'I cabled last week for a "Consol" mineral-water machine, and got Calabar "on duty" for three weeks to fix it up. I shall get on to Trenchard's boat here and go with him. Rather nice! I only hope I haven't forgotten all about the machine and it fails! The "Accra" people arrive at end of the month, Guggisberg [1] included, to play us polo, tennis, golf, and cricket; so I shall just get back in time, and as I am playing it 's rather exciting.'

'*March* 25, 1907.

'I have been unfortunate enough to get a smack on the head with a polo stick, just above the eyebrow, and so I am not writing much. I have had it sticked, and it will be all right in a few days. In the meantime, while healing, it 's somewhat painful. I go to Calabar this day fortnight, and return after a week's stay there.'

'Force Mess, Lagos, *April* 8, 1907.

'Since last week I have had the busiest time of my life; with the 'Intelligence' Office, which I am running, and the Mess and the new tennis-court and soda-water factory, I've been well occupied, with the latter especially, and until we get a new well fitted up with a pump cistern, and main to our back yard, we can't cable for the new plant, towards which we are collecting £200. I have been on the point of cabling several times. Last Wednesday I thought it settled as regards water, but the High Commissioner was up at Ibadan for the races there, and as I was going to Calabar to-day I thought I'd better go up to see him, so I got leave and on Thursday I left for Iba by rail. Saw H.C. next day and the races, came down "special" Sunday, yesterday, everything settled, rushed off to the Public Works this morning before leaving for Calabar to see if Pump palaver was all right, and found they hadn't got an

[1] Lt.-Colonel F. G. Guggisberg, C.M.G., D.S.O., R.E., Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Gold Coast.

elevator pump, only a "hand" one, and so we couldn't pump up to a cistern and get the pressure. This will probably have to be specially indented for, and so waste two months. I go out with all my boxes to the boat with Trenchard, thinking the new machine is on board for Calabar, find it is not, and so return here for another fortnight until it does arrive.

'So now I am back in Lagos again, and can push on the mineral-water factory here, and will go to Calabar for two weeks next fortnight, and so I go on working. I have to get everything for our tennis-court, too, from the P.W.D., which requires a lot of tact. I 'm pretty fit, but it is very hot still, and no rest at night. Ibadan was ripping "air," but nothing to do.

'The Accra people have cried off the polo, much to our disgust, and so there is no excitement to look forward to.'

'Force Mess, Lagos, *April* 15, 1907.

'I am very busy in the Mess making improvements, and also making all equipment for starting heads and posts, lemon-cutting, tent-pegging, etc.'

'Lagos, *April* 22, 1907.

'I have just come down from "Oshogbo," sixty-two miles above Ibadan, where I went last Friday to the opening ceremony of the new extension of the railway line, which is eventually going to Kano in N. Nigeria. Major Maclear and I went up to Ibadan, stopped at the Mess there the night, went to Oshogbo the next day, where lunch was served, and back to Ibadan for dinner. Terrible journey, and I was very disappointed with the travelling and the country, but if anything it 's thicker than round here. I hoped it would be open.'

'Lagos, *April* 29, 1907.

'I don't expect I shall go to Calabar yet awhile. There is too much to be done here. We had the Annual Regatta last Friday, and we entered a boat at the last minute in the European Fours, and after a desperate race we got second

prize, £5. If we hadn't had an old sea-boat, odd oars, etc., we would have won. Saturday a smoking concert at the club, at which I gave a few turns. The amount of work here is terrible. Of course I needn't do it, but I do. I shall probably go to Calabar next fortnight, as I hear the Calabar machine is on the next boat. I only hope it 's not beyond my power of doing.'

'LAGOS, *May* 27, 1907.

'The Accra polo team arrived last Thursday. We played them on Saturday three chukkers and got two goals to their one, and were to have played the remaining three chukkers this afternoon, but it rained incessantly all day, so we can't, and are going to play 6 A.M. to-morrow morning if possible, as they have to leave in the homeward mail for Accra to-morrow at 9 A.M. Last Friday we had "Empire Day" here, and sports for 7000 Lagos school children. I had 2500 to look after, and we got through a programme of about ten events.

'The Mess is like an hotel now with all these Accra guests. It 's too much, and also an examination for promotion ; fourteen here in a Mess for seven. Trenchard is up from Calabar to play polo for us. I was going over to Ebute Meta to tennis yesterday (Sunday) with Trenchard, but couldn't, as a go of fever came on which kept me in bed.'

'CALABAR, *June* 23, 1907.

'I had a rotten trip round. We had a rough passage across the bar, on which we bumped three times, and were then lifted off again luckily by a wave which continually broke over the ship. When we reached the roads, there was no mail steamer, and so we bobbed about in a cockle-shell boat from 7 A.M. till 2 P.M., and I really thought I should "bust." I think eventually I must have collapsed, for I woke up and found the mail steamer had arrived. We lay about 100 yards off, and this has to be done in surf boats. You had to make a jump out into the surf boat at a suitable moment, for it was bobbing up and down like a cork, sometimes above, sometimes below, the level of the branch boat

deck, and sometimes away from it. I was the first to get in, and then alongside the mail steamer it was awful, and it took five minutes to get the "Mammie-chair" let down into the surf boat, which was doing about 20 feet vertical travel. It rained the whole way to here, so altogether it wasn't much of a health trip, and I got most of my clothes spoilt, too, from sea-water getting in through the keyhole. I think the machine will be a great success. I am only waiting now for the P.W.D. to join up a couple of pipes and I shall start. It is a great improvement, and I wonder people haven't been poisoned by the old one. I hope to get back to Lagos next Saturday to carry through the water supply finally. But when everything was fixed, and they were going to start putting up the windmill pump and tank and main from the race-course well to our Mess, the day before I started from here, and wanted to cable home for the machine, the P.W.D. suddenly discovered they hadn't got the piping to carry the water. They promised to cable for it, but whether they have done so or not I cannot tell yet. We played football yesterday *v.* the mail steamer and beat them, and to-morrow we play H.M.S. *Dwarf*, which has just arrived here.

'*PS.*—I have managed to get off at last. I suddenly got the machine to work, the new syrup arrangement and everything, and so they let me go.

'I have had a busy week doing Battery Parades, and every day till 6.30 in the factory. I got a cut finger from a broken bottle, and this, I think, has produced a "Bubo" in my throat, which makes it torture to swallow, and makes it as bad as being seasick. So this trip won't have been much pleasure. We want a bad transhipment at Lagos to-morrow only to complete it.

'Mair is very sick at my being wanted in Lagos, and I shall have to return for gun practice in six weeks up at Afikpo.'

'Lagos, *July* 8, 1907.

'I arrived back here safely, though I had a terrible experience, for the branch boat, an old tub, was suddenly caught

up by a current and taken slap on the bar 4 P.M., just as we were coming in, and there we had to stop with waves breaking over till high water 10 P.M., when we got off and anchored. About 150 passengers, no food, drink, etc., and two little boats that probably have never been launched. I thought she would break up. As a result of cold, etc., my sore throat got worse. This place is under water all this period. We walk straight out of the Mess into 6″ of water all round. Throat got ulcerated, and so couldn't eat or drink, and have had to have it daily cauterised. Getting all right now. Plenty of work, managed to raise £250 for M.W. factory, and to have our own distiller. P.W.D. have forgotten to estimate for piping, and there 's none in the country. I shall be glad to cast off my various duties next Tuesday, when I leave for Calabar—Mess caterer, Mess president, polo, football, etc., mineral-water factory, new tennis-court, besides my work. I shall probably return here in a fortnight, though, and be found some job, musketry or something, as it will take two months to get our M.W. concern going here. Moorhouse has got an extension, so will return in November.'

'LAGOS, *July* 15, 1907.

'I have had a bad week with my throat, and it is worse to-day than before, so I can't do anything much, and eating is very painful. It 's impossible to get well in this place, and we are surrounded with water. Good thing the house is built on piles. We haven't played a game now for two months owing to the amount of water lying about.'

His last letter home complaining of a sore throat that he could not get rid of was followed by a telegram from Major Trenchard, dated August 30 :

'Son out of danger sailed 24th.'

A letter dated August 9, which arrived about the same time, stated that he had been attacked with blackwater fever when starting for Calabar, and for a time was in a critical situation.

During the voyage home he recovered his health, and was allowed a period of leave for convalescence, but even had he wished it, he would not have been allowed to return to S. Nigeria.

1908

In March 1908 Lt. Steel read a paper before the Royal Geographical Society on 'Exploration in Southern Nigeria' under the presidency of Sir G. Taubman Goldie, in which he described the proceedings of the several columns with which he had been connected; the general characteristics of the country between the Niger and Cross Rivers, illustrated with lantern slides from his own photographs; the nature of the soil; and the customs and superstitions of the various tribes with which he had come in contact. An interesting discussion followed, in which Sir Ralph Moor, who had been High Commissioner at the time, Messrs. Shelford, Cotton, and Parkinson took part and bore witness to the accuracy of Lt. Steel's observation, the lucidity of his description, and the interest he had infused into a subject hitherto little known.

In April 1908 Lt. Steel was gazetted Captain and posted to the 68th Battery R.F.A. at Woolwich. It may be noted here that about this time considerable reductions were being made in the Artillery: men who had enlisted for long service and who wished to re-enlist were not allowed to do so; consequently the country was flooded with discharged men for whom no employment could be found. Societies were formed in many places to remedy this grievance, but it was difficult to cope with, and great distress was caused; and to the surprise of those who knew the facts, Ministers endeavoured to explain in Parliament that there had been no reduction. The records of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society afford ample corroboration of this.

Through the kindness of Lady Tritton [1] I have obtained

[1] Lady Tritton, wife of Sir Seymour Tritton, K.B.E., who has devoted years of her life to promoting the welfare of soldiers and sailors.

the following figures as to the number of cases dealt with by this Society as follows :—

1907	16888
1908	19297
1909	17951

The figures are vouched for by Major Tudor Craig (Secretary).

The Battery to which Captain Steel was posted was used principally as a training Battery for the short-service men who were being enlisted to fill the places of those who had been discharged under the aforesaid regulations, and it was in this way, and also on account of our connection with the above-mentioned Society, that we became cognisant of these facts.

The Major was on leave and Captain Steel settled himself in the Major's quarters. The wave of economy, of which mention has been made, had swept over the barracks at Woolwich, and they were in a condition of neglect and disrepair.

In June he was occupied in correcting Survey Papers for prizes, and in July he took the Battery to a training camp at Trawsfynnid [1] in North Wales, and in August to Gravesend for field training. In September he took a short leave, and in October he was invited to lecture at the Geographical Institute at Newcastle, where he met with a great reception, and later went up for an examination to the Ordnance College, Woolwich, which he passed, and was directed to join on January 1, 1909.

Writing about this time, December 1908: 'My time is scarcely my own just now; last night we had our winter ball, which takes up a good lot of every one's time. Sketches and Reconnaissance Lectures every afternoon and the Franco-German War with weekly discussions: then arranging teams and ground for a match we played this afternoon

[1] Letters from the camp at Trawsfynnid have not been preserved; an excellent description of it is given by Major A. Hamilton Gibbs in his recent work, *The Grey Wave*, p. 80.

v. London United Banks whom we beat 4—0, training for the Army Cup. We play the 2nd Grenadier Guards in the second round at Walthamstow on December 26. My leg is perfectly all right, thanks to the rest.'

He was also busy with a Christmas treat at the Shrapnel Barracks to the women and children of the Battery in collaboration with the wife of the Major, who had recently returned from leave. The entertainment was a great success owing to the exertions of Mrs. Short, assisted by Miss Davies; Captain Steel; Q.M.S. Mann; Sergeant Sutton, R.A.; Sergeant Myhill, R.E.; and Sergeant Stringer, R.A.M.C. On January 1 following he joined the Ordnance College.

CAPT. E. A. STEEL AT TRAWSFYNNID.

Facing p. 52.

OFFICERS AT ORDNANCE COLLEGE, 12TH ORDNANCE COURSE, 1909.

Left to right: *Standing*—Capt. C. S. Young, R.F.A.; Lieut. H. E. Lane, R.G.A.; Lieut. L. C. P. Milman, R.F.A.; Capt. F. C. C. Ensor, R.G.A.; Lieut. O. R. E. Milman, R.G.A.; Capt. C. H. Unwin, West Riding Regt.; Lieut. S. G. Leslie, R.G.A.; Lieut. L. C. Larmour, R.G.A.; Capt. G. C. D. Kempson, East Lancs. Regt. *Chairs*—Capt. A. P. Williams-Freeman, D.C.L.I.; Capt. W. H. W. Young, Leicester Regt.; Capt. W. E. Kemble, R.G.A.; Capt. H. de B. Milller, D.S.O., R.F.A.; Capt. G. Ogilvie, R.G.A.; Capt. E. A. Steel, R.F.A. *Ground*—Lieut. C. S. Tute, R.G.A.; Capt. H. W. Gardiner, R.A., I.O.D.; Lieut. W. M. Burdon, R.A., I.O.D.; Lieut. R. C. Scafe, R.M.L.I.

Facing p. 53.

CHAPTER VII

Joins Ordnance College—Lecture at United Service Institution—Brother's Marriage—Aviation Meeting, Doncaster—Rejoins 68th Battery—Course of Economics, Clare Market—Certificate—Transfer to 17th Battery, Hilsea—Survey Course, Southampton.

1909

DURING the session at the Ordnance College (February 4) he gave a lecture at the United Service Institution, Whitehall, under the presidency of Col. V. G. Kemball, C.B., D.S.O., on 'Exploration in Southern Nigeria'; and in due course obtained the certificate of having passed the Ordnance Course.

A photograph of the officers comprising this, the Twelfth Ordnance Course, is here given, with their names inscribed thereon.

Captain Steel commenced work at the College on January 4, 1909. He was recommended for 'O' certificate and A.O.D. at the conclusion of the course.

During this time the 68th Battery moved to Aldershot.

On July 29 Capt. Steel was best man to his elder brother, Lt. John Miles Steel, R.N., on his marriage with Laura Kathless, twin daughter of the late W. Sinclair-Thomson, M.D., and Mrs. Sinclair-Thomson of Heathcroft, Blackwater, Hants, at St. Andrew's, Wells St., London.

It would appear from his correspondence that he turned his attention to the feasibility of establishing a corps of aviation in the British Army.

It will be remembered that the practical aspect of aviation was still in an experimental stage, and the first important gathering was convened at Doncaster, I think originally by Captain Windham, a retired officer of the Navy, and it was remarkable at the time for two reasons—first,

credit and obtained a certificate to that effect and rejoined his Battery. Early in the year 1911 he was offered an appointment in the New Zealand Service, and he was much inclined to accept it, but at the last moment he was persuaded not to go for various reasons, and another officer was found who was willing to do so.

1911

June.—Another question to which Capt. Steel had been giving some attention was that of the necessity for providing some sort of observation platform for use in the field. The following letter from the Director of Artillery shows the result of these deliberations, and one cannot help being reminded of the attitude at headquarters generally towards all original proposals emanating from young officers, and also the fact that at one time there was a disposition to belittle the use of artillery and of engineers in war, and indeed to preach the doctrine that in future wars neither arm would be of so much use as their respective advocates contemplated. It would be interesting to compare some opinions held fifteen or twenty years ago at the War Office with the experience of this recent war.

Extract from enclosure, 68th Battery, R.F.A., Capt. E. A. Steel, R.F.A.

'54/Artillery/4519 (A.2),
'W.O., London, *June* 17, 1911.

'With reference to previous correspondence on the subject of observation platforms for use in the field I am informed that the Officers named in the margin may be thanked for the trouble they have taken. It is not proposed to take any further action with regard to their proposals.

'(Sgd.) C. G. Henshaw,
'*Colonel for Director of Artillery.*

'To G. O. C.-in-C., Aldershot.'

In July 1911 he was transferred to the 17th Battery at

Hilsea, and in August attended the Survey Course at Southampton to fit himself for a post on the Boundary Commission then in prospect, and he remained there until the conclusion of the course, when he was warned that his services might be required for Boundary work.

CHAPTER VIII

Offered Appointment to Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission—Sails, January 1912—Work in Rhodesia—Leave, November—Appointed Chief Commissioner—Work on Boundary.

THE boundary between Northern Rhodesia and Southern Congo was defined as the Zambezi-Congo watershed by the Treaty of 1885; while the western boundary between Rhodesia and Portuguese Angola was defined by the Anglo-Portuguese Convention of 1891, which was later modified by the King of Italy's award of 1905.

The Anglo-Belgian Commission for the survey of the Rhodesia-Congo border reached Ndola on September 2, 1911. The British Commissioners were originally Major R. A. Gillam, R.E., in command; Capt. Everest, Welsh Regiment; Capt. R. Walker, R.E.; Lt. S. Gore-Browne, R.F.A.; and Lt. O. E. Wynne, R.E. The Belgian Commissioners were Major Begraud, in command until April 1912; Capt. Weber, in command from that date; and Lts. Le Poivre, Gendarme, van Bleyenberg, Windart, Donner, and Ermens.

On October 16 Capt. Everest was killed by a lion, and Capt. Steel was sent out to replace him, arriving early in 1912.

In November 1911, on the information reaching home of Capt. Everest's death, Capt. Steel had been warned through the officer commanding his Battery at Hilsea that his employment with the Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission had been approved subject to medical report on him, and this having been obtained, he made preparations for his departure, and sailed in the *Armadale Castle*, January 4, 1912. The first part of his journey was stormy, and he was unable to land at Madeira, and passengers for there were

MEMBERS OF THE ENGLISH COMMISSION.

MEMBERS OF THE BELGIAN COMMISSION.

GATHERING COPPER ORE OFF THE SURFACE OF A COPPER MOUNTAIN, KAMBOVE.

TUNNEL INTO THE COPPER MOUNTAIN

landed with difficulty. Farther south the weather improved, and the last ten days were occupied with sports, tournaments, fancy dress dances, and concerts, etc.

He writes: 'I met some very nice people on board—the Macfarlanes among others, going out to see their gunner boy at Pretoria. I have been at a table with Sir Starr Jameson; Sir Charles Metcalfe, the great South African explorer; and Mr. and Mrs. Willie James, who are going on a pleasure trip. Mrs. Macfarlane has just made a sketch of me for your benefit. There are a good many Belgians on board going up to Katanga. I will try and stay a few days at Livingstone.'

From Livingstone he writes: 'After a long train journey I was glad to have a rest. This place is like Calabar, always damp from the spray of the Zambezi Falls 7 miles away. We had a fine view arriving over the bridge. I am staying the night with the Basuto Police Mess, and leave to-morrow for Bwana Mkubwa to join Major Gillam.

'Bwana Mkubwa is one of the largest copper mines in Rhodesia, and was worked extensively by the Arabs, the deposit being of the same nature as at Katanga. The present workings have attained a depth of over 400 feet, and yet the true sulphide zone has not been met with, the ore being still all malachite or carbonate of copper. Seven miles north-west is the Government station of Ndola, where the R.M.[1] has his headquarters.

'I have been here three days conferring with Gore-Browne on the triangulation scheme before he goes on six weeks' leave. When he returns we will have to go westward, while Major G. administers from Headquarters, and is much occupied with correspondence and arranging about food and carriers.'

1912

'Bwana Mkubwa, *February* 6, 1912.

'I shall have to carry on alone westwards until Gore-Browne returns. I go to-morrow morning to join the

[1] Resident Magistrate.

Base Camp at Kafulafuta, 28 miles S.E. by S. Walker has been to see me here. He and Wynne leave shortly to go north. This is quite the poorest country I have ever seen. No food and no inhabitants.

'I walked round the mine the first day, and went to see the manager, Mr. Cockburn, who has a brother in the R.G.A. (studying Japanese). I have been there several times since. He is leaving the day after to-morrow. The only work going on is pumping; they are marking time to see how the Tanganyika Concessions are faring in Katanga with their ore before doing anything here.'

'KAVALLO, BELGIAN CONGO,
'*February* 12, 1912.

'Walker and Wynne depart to-morrow, and we become two separate Commissions. We have just come over here for a reception to the Belgian Commissioners, and to-morrow I go off observing.'

'KAFULAFUTA CAMP, *February* 20, 1912.

'It has rained for five days, and so I returned here with little results. I am busy taking in all the technical details, and getting the hang of the work done so far.'

'*February* 26, 1912.

'I am at a place called Lunga, a mountain about 5 miles E. of railway and 40 miles S. of Bwana Mkubwa. It is one of our Trig. points. It has taken me some days to make the place possible for a theodolite, and I am going to start observing to-morrow.'

'*March* 6, 1912.

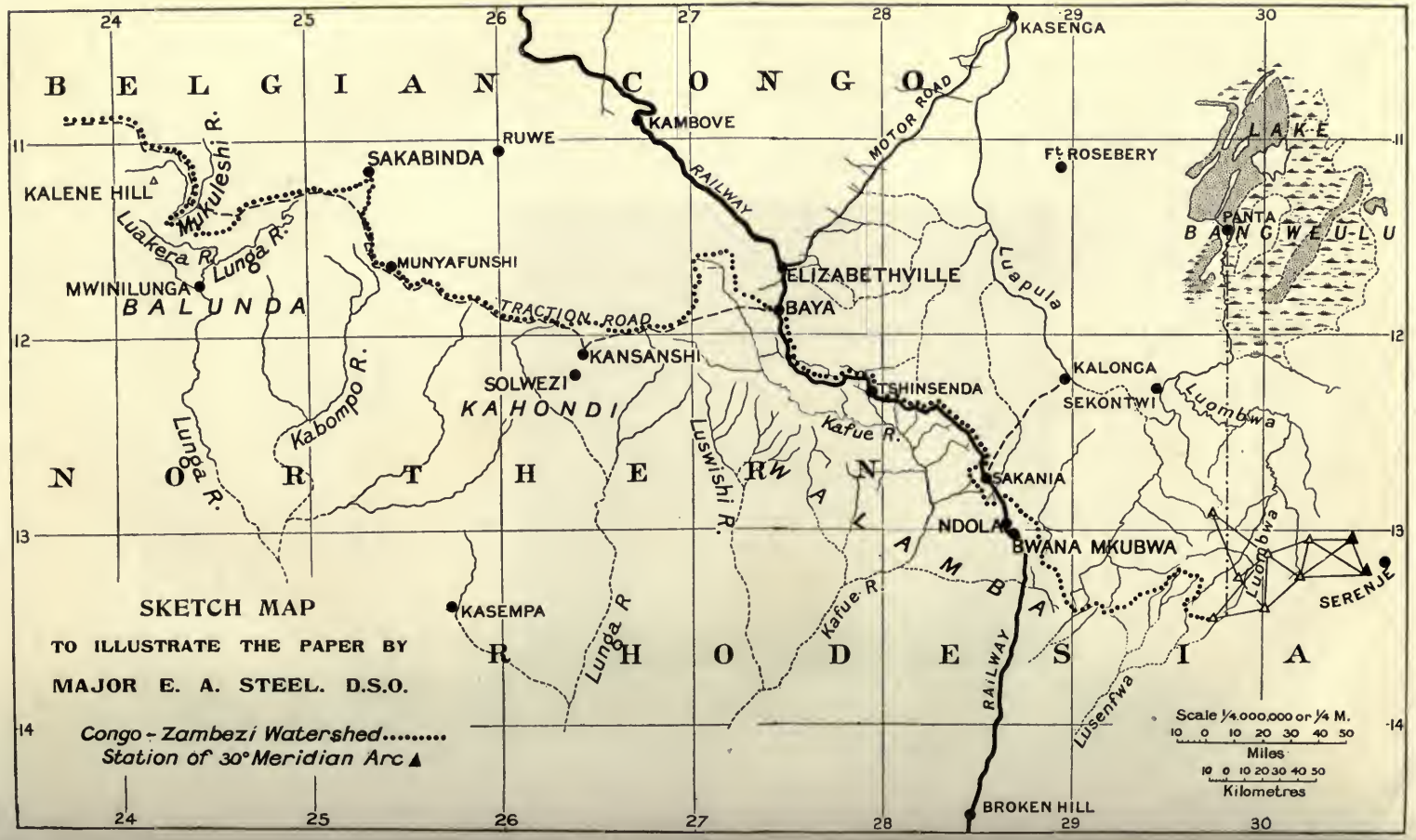
'I left Kafulafuta ten days ago visiting and observing from Trig. points, which all required several days' work to make them fit to observe from, and I am gradually on my way back to Bwana Mkubwa for a few days, I hope, with all the data for the triangulation up to the Lini.'

'*March* 28, 1912.

'I have got back after a useless trek down to the Kafue and through to here again, 70 miles, in the search for

CAPT. E. A. STEEL.

Facing p. 60.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BELGIAN CONGO
NORTHERN RHODESIA
KASENGA
KAMBOVE
RUWE
SAKABINDA
KALENE HILL
Mukuleshi R.
Luakera R.
Lunga R.
MUNYAFUNSHI
MWINILUNGA
BALUNDA
TRACTION ROAD
RAILWAY
MOTOR ROAD
Ft ROSEBERY
LAKE
BANGWEULU
PANTA
ELIZABETHVILLE
BAYA
Luapula
KANSANSHI
SOLWEZI
KAHONDI
Kabompo R.
Lunga R.
Luswishi R.
TSHINSENDA
KALONGA
SEKONTWI
Luombwa
Kafue R.
SAKANIA
NDOLA
BWANA MKUBWA
KASEMPA
Lunga R
Kafue R.
RAILWAY
SERENJE
Luombwa
Luisenfwa
BROKEN HILL
SKETCH MAP
TO ILLUSTRATE THE PAPER BY
MAJOR E. A. STEEL. D.S.O.
Congo - Zambezi Watershed.....
Station of 30° Meridian Arc ▲
Scale 1/4,000,000 or 1/4 M.
10 0 10 20 30 40 50
Miles
10 0 10 20 30 40 50
Kilometres

hills, but it is quite the most hopeless country I have ever seen, you can see nothing. We have come to the end of hills here for a bit, and from Kaloko Hill just here, our farthest point, you can see nothing but a vast expanse of monotonous tree-tops for 50 miles or so. G. B. has returned from leave, and has gone off to-day to Sabwe, in Belgian territory, to see if he can see anything from there; on the strength of his report I shall have to decide what to do.

'I had to come back here to get the plane-tablers ready with the points for the men up to the rail line, and then I shall go off along the frontier, and we shall have to erect Eiffel Towers in the forest. I wrote to the Belgians the other day to get them to come here and help us in this next bit. They are coming, I am glad to say.'

'SAKANIA, *April* 25, 1912.

'I got a wire from Major Gillam saying he was coming up to see me for the day. The train arrived here 6 A.M., so after meeting him and bringing him to my camp here and having breakfast, wash, etc., we started off to walk out to the "tree" station I am building 3 miles out. On our return we had lunch, and then he had to catch the mail train down.

'On the Thursday before we both arrived down by the same train, he from Tshinsenda and I from Mokambo. We had been building an enormous signal, 30 feet high, but owing to the carriers climbing to the top before we had braced it up properly, it buckled up. However, I left an N.C.O. to finish it, and came here to begin this "piece" of the show at a spot I had noted on one of my previous journeys. Our difficulties lie in the fact that from "Kaloko," a large hill at Bwana Mkubwa, one can see nothing but tree-tops; and the key to the situation lies in the possibility of connecting up Kaloko with Mokambo for a start—60 miles. I have now been here more than a fortnight—twelve days' actual work, and at least another week, what with clearing and putting on a top to the station. The platform is 45 feet high, built in a large fork of a tree,

one of the three arms of which I propose using to fix the theodolite on. The rains are over, and there is a short period of heat. Every one has been ill: Gore-Browne carried into Ndola in a hammock with bad fever; Le Poivre, one of the Belgian Commission, ill with fever for a fortnight now. In fact, I am the only one who has done any work at all the last three weeks. "Begraud," the Major of the Belgian Commission, has been recalled, so that they have been at a standstill for a month. However, Le Poivre came in this morning to borrow my map to copy, so perhaps they 're going to make a start soon. Expensive place Sakania. Sometimes an enterprising hotel proprietor gets up a cow and kills and charges 3 francs 50 for a pound of meat; and so on. A bottle of beer, value 4d., cannot be had under 2 francs 50. I have not been over fit myself, partly from doing too much and also as we cannot get any fresh food. I can't even get a fowl, simply because they 're not in the country.'

'*May* 2, 1912.

'Major Gillam left me here to-day for Tshinsenda to start our new headquarters, and I shall be very thankful when I have settled the triangulation that far. After another week of work and clearing I may say I've finished here, and then go to find another point to join up Tshinsenda with Kaloko at Bwana Mkubwa. I leave here 8 A.M. with all the carriers and get back about 6 P.M. We are at present cutting through a whole ridge of forest to see another point.'

'SAKANIA, *May* 30, 1912.

'As you see, I am still rather defeated by this area of 80 miles, and am now building another beacon about 8½ miles out—17 miles a day, as well as a few hours' work there, is enough. There is no decent water there.'

'NDOLA, *June* 6, 1912.

'I went off to Bwana Mkubwa by a goods train to do some observing from "Kaloko," but after two days of waiting from sunrise to sunset it was practically impossible to see anything—so Gore-Browne is going off with a helio and it

will be slow work, as one of us will have to work the helio for the other from practically every point. I went up to Ndola to call on the new magistrate there and stayed the night, getting on at the siding there at 4 A.M. for here. These Thursdays and Sundays are always busy days here, the train running from the south 6 A.M., also the one from Elizabethville at the same time; the south train proceeds north 9 A.M.

'There is very little progress to report. An N.C.O. arrived in this morning, with news of having seen nothing from the trees on the route I sent him, although practically surrounded by beacons.'

'SAKANIA, *July* 3.

'I have just arrived back here after a detour—visiting Bwana Mkubwa again, which seemed rather a retrograde move. We are encountering another difficulty now—grass-fire, and the whole country under a kind of London fog: 10 miles is about the limit of vision. On the train here I found the Co. Mine Manager of Bwana Mkubwa going up to Elizabethville and had to give him breakfast, and then had to see Cpl. Wilde, R.E., who had returned here the night previous. I had sent him out to report on a certain big tree about 10 miles off that I had more or less fixed, but the first carrier he sent up on rather a rotten rope which broke with him about 50 feet up and he was killed, so they came back having done nothing, and I find a state of mutiny here. I'll have to go myself now, and have sent the Corporal off to Kafue on a tree-cutting job.'

'KAFUE, *July* 17, 1912.

'Last week I was building another tree station 9 miles from Sakania, and then the N.C.O. down here rushed up to me one day to say he didn't know what to do, so I came down here. It's a very pretty place this—the only one I've seen—as the Kafue runs through high cliffs, and my tent overlooks it. It's just like the Rhine—but the tsetse flies are bad. I'm very fit and hope to shoot some meat here. I'm going to look on this week as my seaside holiday.

I fancy every one at home is doing the same. I have a canoe made and am having it " tarred," and in the evenings shall do some paddling and sketching on the river. If it wasn't for hippos and crocodiles it would be grand, but the natives won't go near it. I 'm sending this in 20 miles to the Belgian station of Mokambo to catch the mail.'

'SAKANIA, *July* 24, 1912.

' I came up here from the Lufua, the name for the Upper Kafue, last Sunday, and return to-morrow. I 've had a lot of carriers to pay off and a lot of writing, etc. We found another small hill in the forest, and on it are building the biggest tower we have built so far. I have left an N.C.O. to go on with it. If we can see over the intervening ridge from the top we shall have done the trick, but even then, when you only get three days a month when you can see over 20 miles, you never know how you will be kept observing. I have made a very nice camp on the Kafue where it runs between high hills, and could have a very pleasant time there if there was no trouble with the triangulation. I was hoping to hear last mail of J.'s[1] promotion. I have not even had time to take more than a dozen photos. I shall be very glad to get to Tshinsenda. Then I hope not much more than a week there will suffice for the calculations, and I shall push out and make a camp at Makolo (Baya), one station from Elizabethville, and from there work right across the Upper Kafue.'

' *September* 5, 1912.

' Gillam was staying with me last week at my camp here near Kilometre 55 on the railway, the only place with some water near, where I am building another huge beacon at Kilometre 49, seeing something of the difficulties and nature of the work.

' He 's not very fit, I 'm afraid. We have just heard the Colonial Office are paying our passages home, and I shall leave with Gillam, December 4, from Cape Town probably.'

[1] His brother, promoted Commander June 30, 1912.

THE UPPER KAFUE RIVER.

KANSANSHI MINE.

Facing p. 64.

THE COMMISSION'S TRACTION TRAIN LEAVING BAVA.

'*November* 26, 1912.

'A place called "Songe," a mountain about 5 miles east of the railway and 40 miles south of Bwana Mkubwa, one of our tree points which it has taken me some days to make possible for a theodolite. I am going to start observing to-morrow.'

It will have been gathered from the narrative, so far in rather unnecessary detail, that the difficulties hitherto encountered related entirely to the question of observation. The portion of country traversed from Bwana Mkubwa to Tshinsenda had been a most trying piece of work to tackle, and members of both sections of the Commission were tired out when work ceased in December.

'How sick one was' (writes Captain Steel) 'of the monotonous gently undulating forest with ridge after ridge of the same height and never a view obtainable except by climbing the highest tree after much preparation and forest clearing.'

An occasional grass-fire was another difficulty, but although the country was sparsely populated they had not experienced much difficulty about getting carriers, and as his camps at Sakania, Tshinsenda, and Makolo (Baya) were all near the railway their food and communications had not given them any serious trouble.

'By March 1912 the triangulation had reached the railway, and difficulties now began in earnest. The next 60 miles of country were to take us longer than the last 150 miles, owing to the absence of any hills, and we had to build a series of six beacons in order to get through this forest area to Tshinsenda. All these beacons were 50 to 70 feet in height, whilst an immense amount of clearing had to be done to establish intervisibility all round. The work of the Commission was much hampered during the next hot weather months by the haze that pervades the whole country until the rains break again, which is sometimes in September; but in this particular year there was no rain till December. Even with the aid of a heliograph, which

we always had to use, it was impossible for days on end to see more than 10 miles. Another source of trouble was bush-fires, the natives setting fire to the grass for the purpose of concentrating the game close to the large rivers. The scarcity of water is also a difficulty, but only on the Rhodesian side, for as one proceeds along the watershed, from the railway crossing to the 24th meridian, the rise to the watershed from the Congo side is abrupt, and the whole country appears before one like a panorama, whilst on the Rhodesian side nothing can be seen farther than the next ridge of tree-tops only a few miles away. During these hot weather months it was a great relief when work took us down to the Kafue River, the southern limit of our work in this region, for here along the banks of this beautiful stream, untouched as yet by the hand of man, one sees Nature at its best.

'At Tshinsenda a base was measured by the Belgian Commission along a straight stretch of the railway line, with a prolongation into the forest to obtain the necessary length.'

'On the journey down we met Sir J. Hewett, who travelled down with us from the Victoria Falls to Mafeking. He had been up paying a visit. We had some "bridge" in the train, in which a travelling missionary joined to make up the "four." I remember Sir John saying good-bye to me one early morning in Mafeking station while I was hanging out of the window in my pyjamas.'

1913

During the recess, as Major Gillam was advised not to return, the Colonial Office decided to appoint Capt. Steel with rank of Major to be Chief Commissioner of the Commission delimiting the frontier between N. Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo, and Lt. E. M. Sealy, R.E., was appointed Assistant Commissioner. They both started for Cape Town in March.

'*R.M.S. Balmoral Castle, April* 4, 1913.

'To-morrow we reach Cape Town, and very glad I shall be. We had a very nasty trip to Madeira and I as usual dis-

appeared, though it wasn't till after dinner on the Saturday night this time! It was very cold, and then for a few days after Madeira I have been *hors de combat*; however we then had it pretty hot and I'm feeling quite myself again. It's been a rotten voyage. Every one either married or invalid.

'I shall stay four days in Cape Town arranging matters connected with the Commission and then proceed to Livingstone, where I shall stay another three days, and then to Sakania.'

Before the recess it will be remembered he had made a camp at Makolo (Baya), one station from Elizabethville, on the Katanga Railway: to this camp he returned April 28, 1913.

'I have now been here one week, though it has seemed like a couple of days, and we are getting into shape.

'There is a fearful amount to do. I don't think we have forgotten anything, and everything is going smooth.'

The question of supplies, it has already been observed, had not hitherto presented much difficulty. The line of watershed was sufficiently near the railway as far as Baya to make it useful for their purpose. From this point on to Kansanshi and thence to Munyafunshi, and again from Munyafunshi, the railway and boundary line diverged and the former was no longer of assistance to them. How the difficulties were overcome is thus explained by Major Steel:—

'The question of transport was the most serious one that presented itself on resuming work at the beginning of April 1913. The problem was this—how to maintain eight white men and four hundred black men in a practically uninhabited and foodless country for fifteen months, the farthest point of which was 350 miles or a twenty-eight days' journey from our rail-head at Baya. As a native can only carry a total load of twenty-eight daily rations, it follows that he cannot be sent farther than a fourteen days' journey, in which case he will have consumed all

the flour he started with, as he requires the remaining fourteen rations to feed himself coming back. As the first half of this country was tsetse fly area, any form of animal transport was also out of the question. There remained but one solution, the use of traction engines, which were fortunately found available at Kansanshi Mine. A traction road existed from here to Baya, as this is the normal route by which supplies arrive and copper is exported. The next difficulty was that as one proceeds west along the watershed the hard red soil disappears and the surface consists of a layer of soft sand, over which traction engines cannot go. Fortunately on the watershed we leave the fly area at some 160 miles from Baya. A suitable place was found here for our big base camp on the headwaters of the Munyafunshi River, an affluent of the Lualaba. Here the traction engines could arrive, and it would be possible from this point onwards to use ox transport. With the help of the Anglo-Portuguese Boundary Commission, who were starting work on the 24th meridian, a road was made through the forest to this point, and by September our total requirements for fifteen months had been transported from Baya, some twenty thousand loads, before the first rains began and rendered traction transport useless.

'With ox transport in view for the second half of our work, two bullock waggons had also been transported from Bulawayo to Munyafunshi with the necessary harness. Some years ago, when the railway from Lobito Bay to Katanga looked like arriving soon, an Englishman, Mr. Owen, had driven up a herd of cattle from Barotse Land, and taken up a farm on the Lunga River near Sakabinda, having in view the demand that would arise for cattle. For some five years he had lived a lonely existence—the only white farmer in the district. This man now came to our assistance, and the oxen were quickly trained for draught, though not without some anxiety, as an untrained team of twenty-four oxen can tie themselves into some knots in an African forest. Altogether seven food depots were

formed along the watershed, and so well had everything gone that when work ceased on the 24th meridian the following May only half a dozen loads of meal remained at the Mwinilunga depot.'

'BAYA, *May* 13, 1913.

'Everybody is out at work, and we 've made good use of the month of clear weather after the rains for observing. I am off to Elizabethville to-morrow for four days—on official visits to Governor and Belgian Commission.'

There was no mail bag made up for Baya, so he had to give his address as below and arrange to get his mail by carrier.

'BAYA, POSTE SAKANIA, *June* 4, 1913.

'We are gradually getting a move on. A traction engine and three waggons went off to start our Depot at Kansanshi, and now I 'm only concerned with being able to get the meal I 've ordered in various parts of Africa up in time for the next. The mines are beginning to do some work and are just getting a new smelting outfit, which will require all their engines for some time. All my staff are working well.

'Weber and Ermens come down to-morrow from E'ville, and I 've been busy with Sealy getting all the calculations ready. We have to fix our positions of all the boundary posts between here and Bwana Mkubwa.'

'BAYA, SAKANIA, *June* 10, 1913.

'Sealy left for Johannesburg to see an ear specialist and I don't know when he 'll come back. G. B. is on ahead doing good work, but the Administration have again failed me with food; so I may not be able to fill the traction train I managed to get for next week to Kansanshi.'

'BAYA, POSTE SAKANIA, CONGO *via* CAPE TOWN,
'*June* 16, 1913.

'Bremner the Escort Officer goes off to-morrow to the Munyafunshi River to make a camp. My next headquarters is Traction Head, so that limits us. It 's out of "fly"

country I 'm told, so Mr. Owen can come with his oxen and take it farther on. At least, I 've told Bremner to collect his oxen and put them on to pulling trees to train them. Then I 'll order some waggons. I hear from Kansanshi there 's no chance of his getting his surety of £250 there, but if I can get hold of his oxen, I 'll probably risk buying the waggons. . . .'

The Commissioner was endeavouring to get Mr. Owen to furnish some security.

'Baya, Poste Sakania, *June* 23, 1913.

'Things are looking better. Friend Owen has found some one to back him for £250, so I 've ordered the waggons from Livingstone. Sealy has arrived and leaves in two days for the front. Gore-Browne reports plenty of hills, and the traction engines are working and meal is arriving from the south. Weber arrived here suddenly to meet Windart, a mapper of theirs, who is beginning round here and has spent all to-day copying all our maps, angles, everything that has taken us the last two months to do ! '

'Baya, Poste Sakania, *July* 1, 1913.

'The last two days have been spent in loading up the three trucks of each of the two traction trains that suddenly came in for us. Our new camp on the Munyafunshi Railway is reported by Bremner and G. B. to be a great success. G. B. has finished a triangulation as far as that. Sealy is observing round Kansanshi, I hope to join him as soon as I can get the account for June quarter in and all the meal for the next twelve months and the two N.C.O.'s who are behind. . . . Other gangs are making a road for the traction engine to our camp on Munyafunshi, or making a road for Mr. Owen to bring his cattle and our waggons along from that camp to the 24th meridian.'

'*August* 18, 1913.

'I have finally decided to leave here September 1, when some carriers will arrive, and all the remainder of the camp will go on to one of the waggons of the traction engines after the nature of a travelling circus as far as Kansanshi.

After that we travel light. I shall have to stay a day or two there and then set out for Munyafunshi : doing some observing at one or two hills *en route*. I am just waiting to hear that Mr. Owen has started on his trip forward from Munyafunshi, but I haven't heard yet. On him depend our fortunes to a great extent. The air is as thick as pea soup now, and it is very hard to see.'

'KANSANSHI, *September* 15, 1913.

'I have just got off at last after some trouble with traction engine people who tried to leave me in the lurch. Weber came on here to see me from Musofi. Longitude of Munyafunshi camp is 25° 25′ East of Greenwich and just in the Congo.'

'MUNYAFUNSHI CAMP, *October* 10, 1913.

'I have moved here at last and very glad too, 190 miles from Baya ! and this is half way. I had to stay some days at Kansanshi, as our store had to be rebuilt. Much business with the Mine people and District Commissioner our Agent. It was rather a trying journey, as it 's the hot season now, and the traction road to Kansanshi a foot thick in dust all the way—almost impossible to walk. After Kansanshi nothing but water-holes to drink from. This is going to be a nice camp. It was well chosen and everything is working excellently. Everybody has had a hard time and we shall have a week's rest here, getting the camps ready for the rains. At the time of writing there is more grass being put on the roof, and the " plasterers " are in, throwing mud at the walls. Nothing has been left behind and nothing forgotten. Owen's two waggons are on their return journey from the 24th meridian, going very slowly, but our food supply is assured, which is a great thing. He himself has dysentery as well as the mine manager at Kansanshi. We have our own postal service to here—six days from Baya.'

'MUNYAFUNSHI RIVER, *October* 12, 1913.

'I am at present alone here, Gore-Browne, Sealy, and Bremner all out doing various jobs. I expect very soon to

be able to see my way through as regards triangulation via the South, where I sent one of the Corporals to report. If so, I shall only stay here long enough to finish off September quarter accounts, get the three N.C.O.'s equipped for another three months, and then go off to Mwinilunga—a Government post just made on the Lunga River (Lat. 11° 43′, Long. 24° 26′), where I shall make my headquarters. We 've still a nasty bit from Mwinilunga to the Corner. I have a good bit of correspondence here, and six months of accounts to collect, several sick carriers to attend to, and as soon as I settle down to do something a native or two rolls in with a basket of flour, so I have to go to the store and weigh it out and give out whatever is wanted, white cloth, blue cloth, salt, or money. As regards J.'s Copper all I can say is that the Mines Bwana Mkubwa and Kansanshi are in the hands of first-class managers out here and are hard at work. The thing is the transport and labour difficulty, and until the Lobito Bay line is finished I can't see any prospects. The Kansanshi, I should say, is the best. It 's practically owned by the Tanganyika Concessions Limited.'

'MUNYAFUNSHI, *October* 17, 1913.

'We are just making our final preparations for our dash to Mwinilunga—but this weather nothing can be done as it 's impossible to see with the haze and smoke of bush-fires. We had some rain, but it only made the whole country like a Turkish bath—thicker than ever. However, the rains will be here in a month and everything must be prepared—houses re-thatched, ditches dug, and stores repaired, and meal carried so as not to get wet. The Belgians are nowhere.'

'MUNYAFUNSHI, *November* 13, 1913.

'I have just put the two new N.C.O.'s on to their new bits—their last section each—and I await the third to-morrow.

'We may pay a dividend in the end.'

'MUNYAFUNSHI, *November* 21, 1913.

'I am still waiting here for the doctor to arrive from Kansanshi. I have to make everything absolutely fool-proof before leaving, so that not a single carrier can go astray, and there 's a lot of sickness. All three N.C.O.'s are on their last section, but at present as we have been able to give them no fixed points they can only make traverses all over their area and fit them in afterwards. The last year has gone quick enough, but not a day's pleasure in it. I don't think we have quite broken the back of it yet. The last bit is the worst. I feel an old man![1] We shall get no more meat. The grass is growing up in the forests and it is impossible to see anything. We 've had a lot of rain already, and it will continue now incessantly till April. If I can only join up our triangulation with the base the " A " Portuguese Commission cut at Mwinilunga (Lat. 11° 45′ 00″, Long. 24° 25′ 00″), which will be my head-quarters, I shall feel easier.

'The news of the arrival of two Boundary Commissions in their country was too much for the wild Balunda, who migrated wholesale, and our difficulties were thereby much increased. However, when they heard we were only there to fix their boundaries and make life more secure for them, they soon began to return and rebuild their villages and grow food, though it was some time before they could be prevailed upon to believe that people who were always climbing trees and building houses in the air, as they termed our beacons, could be up to any good. At Mwinilunga Mr. Pound, the Native Commissioner, had made his headquarters, an altogether suitable site on the high banks upon the Lunga River and free from tsetse fly. The river here is 80 yards wide and 15 feet deep ; we had to build a bridge

[1] I find a letter from Col. Hedley, R.E. (now Sir Coote Hedley, K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G.): '*Dec.* 23.—Yours from Mwinilunga just received. Your letter is a record of a struggle against great difficulties, but I think you are in a fair way to overcome them and that the end is now in view. In future years you will look back with pleasure on your present arduous work.'

as the only canoe had been washed away. Near here the British Section of the Anglo-Portuguese Boundary Commission had measured a base and triangulated to the 24th meridian. To this we joined up, thereby fixing the boundary pillar where the 24th meridian touched the watershed.'

'MWINILUNGA, *December* 19, 1913.

'. . . Have just returned from a fortnight's trip 50 miles S.E. near the Kabompo River trying to join up the triangulation which one of my N.C.O.'s had taken as far as 25″ 00′ and Lat. 12″ 15′ and then came to a sudden stop! owing to being able to see nothing but ridge after ridge. In fact, a piece of the Sakania country again which took us six months to do 40 miles. Consequently I left Sealy to do the observing work at a hill 30 miles W. of Kansanshi as soon as he was able to leave Munyafunshi, where he 's been sick some two months, and rushed in here to tackle this 50 miles necessary to join up with commencement of the A.P.B.C. work at Mwinilunga here.

'Everything has gone so well—carriers—the ox transport —N.C.O.'s. Most trying work this climbing trees in the forest—until you find the right one—and the building of a theodolite station in it can't be left to any one but myself. Fortunately I have an excellent N.C.O. who can do anything he has to do, but one has to be on the spot to say "what next." I have to gradually work up to fix a point on the watershed of Mwinilunga in connection with the last fixed point, *i.e.* Sakabinda. I am practically running the Belgian show, too, with carriers and meal all along the line. I haven't tasted a bit of meat for over six weeks now, and am not likely to, owing to these wild Balunda having only just returned to their homes after their flight into Congo and Portuguese territory. They haven't a fowl hardly, and have come down to selling their children. They live on wild honey and roots and fruits in the forest. The Bulawayo fowls, of which I have twenty-five here—worth about £3 apiece I should think here—have saved me, but they don't lay much—four or five eggs a day—and if any visitors

are about, it 's hardly enough for three of us to live on! Our mail service is working excellently—ten days for the 250 miles up here. It 's run in six sections from Baya, and I don't know if the runners will stick it. It is a fine day to-day, and it makes everything bright after the continual rain for the last month. We are still several inches behind-hand, so may expect more than daily rain for the next three months. I keep very fit and don't look like giving in at present.'

1914

'Camp S. of Mwinilunga, *January* 13, 1914.

'Arrived here last night. In about ten days I shall be able to breathe freely and the end will be in sight for the first time. Wilde and myself have just got through with the triangulation, and it now, I hope, only means "cutting" through the forest a bit. At present we have only connected up from a tree-top to use for a theodolite, but by judicious clearing and making a place for the instrument about 40 feet high we shall get through. To-day we have had 100 carriers only making one avenue through a ridge some 3 miles in front of us which shut out the view to one point, and we have some five points around us to connect up. Sealy is out again I believe.'

'Nr. Mwinilunga, *February* 16, 1914.

'In five weeks we shall have finished the map on the 24th meridian, and then begin the gradual retirement to Baya.

'If everything goes well I expect to leave Cape Town 30th May, which will mean exactly fourteen months in the country, while the rate of work will, I fancy, work out nearly to a record.'

'*March* 3, 1914.

'Not much news except that the Belgians are almost stationary. I am giving them more carriers to enable me to get the frontier decided before I leave. Then they can stay as long as they like. They are drawing such fat pay that they don't like being hurried!

'I am sending this via Mwinilunga-Kasempa mail road for a change. It will probably arrive the same time as next week's letter by our Express Service. It has rained more than ever the last week.'

'MWINILUNGA, *March* 9, 1914.

'Not much news. Mostly calculations and rain. The Lunga R. became impassable, the canoe washed away, and communication stopped, and Weber, who had been observing the other side, could not come, which has delayed our work. We have to agree on a mean value for here, and are waiting for the Belgian result. I shall then make a trip N.W. to the corner and mark the spot where the 24th meridian crosses the watershed. Then return here, pack off the various "whites," and start the accounts for the last six months. Rather a business! I shall then retire via Munyafunshi, Kansanshi, etc., clearing out what is left in the way of stores, etc., at each spot. And there is the whole map to agree upon and draw before I leave and sign.

'Fifty miles N.W. of Mwinilunga is the mission station of Kalene Hill, where Dr. Fisher has chosen an altogether beautiful and healthy site on the north end of a ridge which rises sharp out of the plain and runs S.W. into Portuguese territory, forming the divide between the Luisabo and Zambezi Rivers. Surrounded here by a collection of peaceful and prosperous villages that nestle on the precipitous hill-side of the mission station, Dr. Fisher, ably seconded by his family and a few other fellow-workers, undertakes to cure both body and soul in this heathen land, where he has spent upwards of thirty years. In the midst of quite a little British Colony a few happy days were spent waiting for the arrival of the Belgian and Portuguese Commissions on the 24th meridian.'

'KAMBOSHI, *April* 23, 1914.

'I have just returned from the Belgian camp on the 24th meridian, and after fixing up everything here have been busy getting Wilde and Sealy off across Rhodesia.

I was leaving here to-day for Munyafunshi and Kansanshi when suddenly the three Portuguese officers arrived here; they had come up very quick from Baya, and the carriers had met them in good time and everything gone splendid. Not finding that I had arrived there, at Munyafunshi, they came on here, and everything is being fixed up most satisfactorily.'

'SAKANIA, *May* 31, 1914.

'Yours of 8th May just arrived to-day, and I leave here this evening by the mail train for the south. I shall have a week to spend at Livingstone. I have been looking forward for ever so long to a summer at home on leave.'

CHAPTER IX

Arrives in England, July 1914—Reports at War Office—Ordered on Service—Leaves Southampton, August 27—Havre—St. Nazaire—Le Mans—Ordered to join 4th Division, 35th Battery—Jury—In action to crossing the Aisne—Ordered to North, Oct. 7—March, Villers-Cotterets to Compiègne—Train to Hazebrouck, Oct. 12—In action—Bailleul—Château de Nieppe—Promoted Major.

1914

Leaving Cape Town in June, Capt. Steel arrived in London on July 7, reported his arrival at the Colonial Office, and almost before he had time to look round the strain of threatening war came upon us. In the remoteness of the Congo-Zambezi watershed Capt. Steel had been absorbed in his work and had not been able to keep himself fully instructed in world politics, and the imminence of war came on him as a surprise, perhaps too as a disappointment, because he had undoubtedly looked forward to a summer holiday in England. When war broke out he reported himself to the War Office: he was too late to form part of the Expeditionary Force as the Batteries were all filled up; he was, however, directed to hold himself in readiness, and on August 20 received a telegram directing him to duty with Royal Artillery drafts proceeding to Southampton as reinforcement to the Expeditionary Force, and on the 27th he embarked for the Continent.

Writing on September 18 from 'Advanced base': 'We have had a very unpleasant time, herded about like sheep, and also a three days' voyage in a cattle-boat that nearly gave us all typhoid. I have had a sore throat myself ever since the night I slept on the *Turcoman* from Southampton and got wet through. It has been raining most days since we arrived here, and as we have only a field to bivouac in it is pretty unpleasant. Expect to go up to

the Front at any time. It 's a question of transport and horses. For some absurd reason we are not allowed to see any English papers. There is no doubt some very fine things have been done by various Regiments, some having been practically wiped out, and if due notice is not allowed to be taken of it in the Press it 's bound to have an effect on recruiting as well as on the forces in the field. A few Regiments have got a good bit to get back from the Germans if we can believe any of the stories. I am afraid there is not much left of my old L Battery.[1] I wonder if the story has ever got published in England ? '

The 'three days' voyage in a cattle-boat' mentioned above requires explanation that at the time was not forthcoming. At the commencement of the campaign the British base was Havre and the advanced base Amiens, but when Amiens was threatened, it was decided to remove the advanced base to Le Mans and the British base from Havre to St. Nazaire. Capt. Steel with drafts of men and horses arrived at Havre while this movement was in progress the last week in August, and after a day or two at Havre he re-embarked and was conveyed to St. Nazaire, where he arrived in the first week in September. This accounts for the cattle-boat and for the delay.

'*Sept.* 26.—I have now finished wandering about doing duty with various detachments, etc., and leave to-morrow to join a Battery of the 4th Division, which will be my home in future. It is my old "crowd" from Woolwich and contains my old Brigade. I think, however, "Short" is the only one I know who was with me at Woolwich. It consists of the 39th, 88th, and 68th Batteries. But of course there are many others I may go to in this Division.'

This is what happened. He joined, September 28, the 35th Battery, 37th Brigade, R.F.A., of which this was the order of battle, August 1914 (see Diary) :—

[1] The disaster to L Battery and the heroic conduct of the officers and men was one of the most remarkable incidents of the war. (*R. A. War Commemoration Book*, pp. 9, 10. Bell & Sons.)

37TH BRIGADE R.F.A., 4TH DIVISION

Lt.-Col.—C. Battiscombe.
Adjutant—Capt. R. C. Dodgson.
Orderly Officer—Lt. R. B. Stoney.

Battery.	Major.	Capt.	Lts.
31st.	D. H. Gill.	M. Hartland-Mahon.	A. G. Bates.
			G. P. Simpson.
			G. H. Johnstone.
35th.	H. A. Koebel.	E. A. Wallinger.	M. A. Phillips.
			K. M. Agnew.
			L. Browning.
55th.	G. N. Cartwright.	J. R. Colville.	P. H. Ferguson.
			A. G. Hess.
			S. H. Doake.

At the Aisne in September Capt. Wallinger and Lt. Browning were wounded. The former was disabled, and was succeeded by Capt. Steel.

On January 1, 1915, the Batteries were commanded by Majors Hartland-Mahon, Steel, and Colville ; the Captains were Phillips, Agnew, etc.

The 'Old Crowd,' viz. the 14th and 37th Brigades, whom we had known at Woolwich when Capt. Steel was in the 68th Battery in 1908-9, had all disappeared except Major Short, and he was killed in action in June 1917—Lt.-Col. and C.M.G.

DIARY OF 35TH BATTERY R.F.A., AUGUST 18, 1914, TO SEPTEMBER 19, 1914

1914

Aug. 18. Battery left Woolwich and marched to Dollis Hill, Hendon, where 4th Division was concentrated.
„ 18-21. Dollis Hill.
„ 22. By train to Southampton.
„ 23. Disembarked Boulogne.
„ 24. By train to Fresnoy Le Grand.
„ 25. Marched to Viesly.
During evening retired to Ligny.

Aug. 26. (Battle of Le Cateau.) In action all day in positions near Ligny. Retired at night to Vendhuile.

„ 27. Retirement continued in afternoon and during night 27/28th.

„ 28. To Voyenne and Muriancourt.

„ 29. Retirement continued to Noyon and Carlepont.

„ 30. „ „ Château de Cheuve.

„ 31. „ „ Pierrefonds, Verberie, and Néry.

Sept. 1. Retirement continued to Barron.

„ 2. „ „ Dammartin.

„ 3. „ „ Lagny and Jossigny.

„ 4. „ „ Château Ferrières.

„ 5. „ „ Brie Comte Robert.

End of retirement.

During Battle of Le Cateau Battery had following casualties :—

August 26—

No. 70917 Gunner Cruttenden, killed.
„ 60967 Sergeant Harkness, wounded.
„ 68119 Driver Sargent, wounded.
„ 68105 Driver Francis, wounded.

And during retirement :—

September 2—

No. 67087 Bomb. Turner, wounded.
„ 32710 Bomb. Richards, wounded.

„ 6. Battery closing with flank-guard advanced to Voulangis.

„ 7. Advance continued to Maisoncelles.

„ 8-9. Battle of the Marne. Battery was in action at Jouarre.

„ 10. Advance continued to Dhuisy.

„ 11. „ „ Norvy.

„ 12. „ „ Ecuiry.

Battery formed part of advanced-guard to 4th Division on 11-12th.

Sept. 13. Beginning of Battle of the Aisne. Battery crossed to north bank of river during afternoon and came into action at Bucy le Long.

Night 13/14. Withdrawn to just north of Aisne near Venizel.

Sept. 14. In action all day Venizel. Capt. E. A. Wallinger wounded.

„ 15. Battery withdrawn south of river and came into action near Jury.

„ 15-*Oct.* 1. In action at Jury.

„ 17. Lt. L. Browning wounded.

„ 19. 2nd Lt. H. W. Deacon joined.

Capt. Steel joined the Battery on Sept. 28.

Captain Steel's Itinerary, 1914

Aug. 27. Left Southampton 5.30 P.M.

„ 28. Landed at Havre. Billeted with M. Pierre Morgand, 185 Boulevard Strassbourg.

Sept. 2. Left on s.s. *Turcoman* (cattle-boat) for St. Nazaire.

„ 4. Arrived St. Nazaire. Disembarked after one of the most disgusting voyages.

„ 6. Billeted in a small pub. near station. Day occupied loading trains for the Front, reinforcements for Infantry.

„ 8. Sent off Cavalry reinforcements. Dined at Bretagne.

„ 9. Left St. Nazaire.

„ 10. Arrived Le Mans, marched out to Le Pau camp.

„ 11. Took over Q.M. of camp.

„ 20. Went to Marre to round up stores, harness, and guns.

„ 21. Went to Fourcages, riding. Orders for D. W. Osborne, G. R. Russell to 26th Brigade, 1st Division.

„ 25. Received orders to join 4th Division.

„ 26. Left Le Mans 10 P.M.

„ 28. Arrived Neuilly. Rode out to Div. H.Q. Returned to Villemontoire to pick up baggage and waggon, and reached 35th Battery H.Q. at 9 P.M. at Jury.

Sept. 29. All day in position. Efforts mainly directed on the village of Chivres.

Oct. 2. Left Jury 11.30 P.M. and crossed Venizel Bridge 1.30 to take up an advanced position near Bucy le Long.

,, 3. Got into Billet at 4.30 Venizel. Left at 8 A.M. for the gun positions. Spent most of the day reconnoitring for an advanced observation post which was found eventually in the tall trees by which the Somerset L.I. had their trenches.

,, 4. Shelled German trenches N.E. of Caffres. New Observation Station finished 60 feet high in tree 1000 yards from German trenches. Divine service held in next field for those not required for the service of the guns.

,, 5. Spent all day assisting the attack of Infantry on Braisne. Good effect obtained from our Observation Station. Many Germans were seen during the day, their position being strongly held by rows of trenches.

,, 6. Bad weather, almost impossible to see anything all day. No firing except a certain amount of sniping by the Infantry. In the evening we crossed the Aisne.

,, 7. In action till 4 P.M. when orders came to move. Left Venizel 7 P.M. and reached Septmonts 9 P.M., where we bivouacked in the open and passed an unpleasant night.

,, 8. Hard frost in the morning. Left Septmonts 1 P.M. Marched to Chacrise, arriving 4 P.M. and were billeted in a farm belonging to M. Dubois.

,, 9. Spent the day at Chacrise and had a good rest. Left at 9 P.M. and marched all through the night.

,, 10. Arrived 4 A.M. at Villers-Cotterets and bivouacked in a field outside, very damp and unpleasant. Left at 2 P.M. for Morienval, arriving 5 P.M.

,, 11. Left Morienval at 8 A.M. and marched to Compiègne. Spent the day in making arrangements for entraining. Left at 9.30 P.M. Very cold night in train.

Oct. 12. Passed through Abbeville, Boulogne, Calais, during the day, arriving Hazebrouck 3.30 P.M. Billeted by 7.30 about 2 miles out.

„ 13. Left 7 A.M., took up a position at midday to support our Infantry attack on Fontainehoek and Meteren. The position was taken by the 12th Infantry Brigade. Billeted in a farm at Fontainehoek.

„ 14. All day advance on Bailleul ; reached 8 A.M. The Germans had left the night before. The people were glad to see us, and gave all they had.

„ 15. Got billets in a Maison de Charité which the Nuns had prepared for a hospital ; the day was one of ever-changing orders to move and wait. The inhabitants appeared in the streets for the first time for 15 days, the period of German occupation.

„ 16. Remained in Bailleul all day.

„ 17. Left Bailleul, and took up a position in the grounds of the Château de Nieppe, a beautiful mansion which the Germans had left in a most disgusting state. The gardener received us with open arms.

„ 18. Left Nieppe to take up position near Le Bizet. In action all day. Observation Station in Le Bizet Church ; supported Infantry attack on Le Touquet and Verlinghein. The enemy held the railway line strongly. Slept close by in an estaminet.

„ 19. All day in action, a few miles farther on ; very slow progress was made, the enemy occupying entrenched positions in Le Touquet and Verlinghein. Many casualties ; Verlinghein practically unrecognisable.

„ 20. Supported Infantry attack all day. Slow progress.

„ 21. The enemy began attacking before daybreak, and succeeded in reaching our advanced positions, which were taken. Severe fighting round Le Gheer. Later in the day Somerset L.I. reoccupied the trenches.

Oct. 22. Le Bizet all day in action.

„ 23. Left Le Bizet for Wytschaete to join the 2nd Cav. Div. under Gen. Gough. Owing to difficulty of observation could not fire till the evening. Observation by aeroplane on a German battery too active near Oestervende.

„ 24. Left Oestervende 11 A.M., returned to Le Bizet, took up position as before, our waggon line more in rear.

„ 25. In action all day.

„ 26. In action all day. Received some attention from the German Heavy Battery in the afternoon, which got our range nicely.

Buried B. Macdonald in the Convent Le Bizet.

„ 27. In the morning moved to new position behind the Monastery grounds.

„ 28. A quiet day.

„ 29. A quiet day. Enemy attacked in the evening.

„ 30. Action continued till 2 P.M., the Germans retiring very quickly.

„ 31. In action all day Le Touquet.

Nov. 1. Spent the day in the Observing Station, a house at Le Touquet, which was shelled all day, the occupants remaining in the cellar.

„ 2. Left 1.30 for Pt. 63, arriving about 4 P.M., and in position by daybreak.

„ 3. Promoted Major.

„ 4-8. Continuously supporting the Infantry attacks on Messines. Many Batteries were massed behind Pt. 63. It was touched every day by German shell of every description.

„ 8. Sent off by Gen. Milne to the Infantry with a section. Spent afternoon and evening in the Worcester trenches, and blew up several houses occupied by Germans.

„ 9. After searching every tree in front of Ploegsteert Wood, I eventually spotted a mined house just behind E. Lancs. trenches as being the only

possible place to see from. Completed preparations during the night for observing the following day.

Nov. 10. Spent all day observing, and in the evening a night attack was made which was unsuccessful. Got some rest after 26 hours continuously in the firing-line.

„ 11. Made reconnaissance of German position from a new loop-hole higher up than previously. During the night Germans had blown away half the house.

„ 12-13. The same.

„ 14. After observing all day for the Heavy Battery I received orders to join the Battery after having spent an exciting week. Every day a further piece of my Observing Station was blown away and the telephonic wire cut by shrapnel, so that there was only just enough cover left to observe from.

„ 15. Very bad day, snow, wind, and rain. Eventually a shell hit the château we lived in, and started a fire which we were unable to put out ; we had to make a hurried retirement, saving what we could.

„ 16. The château still burning. All had fallen in, and gunpits full of water.

„ 20. Left Pt. 63 at 3.30 for Nieppe ; replaced by 31st Battery.

„ 25. Major Koebel went on leave.

„ 30. Left Nieppe to take up position on Pt. 63 after refitting.

Dec. 1. Major Koebel returned President of a Court-Martial.

„ 5. Col. Vallentin came and chose positions.

„ 6. Hawkesley came in afternoon.

„ 7. Chose positions. Rained all day. Received letter to begin work in preparation of gun positions.

„ 19. Attack on Le Gheer.

„ 21. Left 2.30 for England.

'*Oct.* 1, *35th Battery R.F.A.*—I have now joined this Battery of the 4th Division—the Division should not be mentioned in the address, only the Battery—and you will see from the papers what we are doing and where we are nightly. We are still bombarding the German position across the river—which is a very strong one. My old Battery and Brigade from Deep Cut are alongside us—the 68th—and Short had a rather hot time the other day, though only one subaltern was hit. The Captain and one subaltern of this Battery too were badly injured.'

'*Oct.* 6, *On the Aisne: Soissons.*—Just at present we have been in rather a tight place, as the enemy, being hemmed in, gradually made some desperate attacks on our trenches at night and got in. At one time they could not have been more than 1000 yards from our guns, but we shelled them out again; one or two Infantry fellows came running through fairly scared out, saying the Germans were after them, but we soon blew them out of the Battery up to the trenches again. Things are easier to-day.'

'*Oct.* 22.—The last three days the 4th Division has had some severe fighting, and casualties have been carried past the Battery all day long; the Germans have made many attacks upon us, and yesterday we expected to have them making a charge on the Battery; but they've given that up now. In fact, their men won't do it. Our own Infantry are first class. The particular Brigade we are supporting have had six days in the trenches, without a wash or hot meal, firing and being fired at incessantly, and they can't stand that. It 's too much. To-day they have been relieved, and we have been brought back about 1000 yds. and are resting in a damp field. Hope to get a wash—all over—later on, but one never knows when the mysterious Staff are going to send one somewhere else. Some Regiments are very nearly all reservists now, but their excellent system of training soon polishes up the ignorant, and the "shikar" spirit which is inculcated in their attack methods

is a fine sight. Unfortunately it 's very difficult country—flat and intersected with innumerable farms, hedges, villages, very suitable for defence. Yesterday the whole attack was held up by a single fortified block of cottages, and the Seaforths were held up. We saw this, and after the fourth Lyddite shell, which made the whole thatched roof slip bodily down and hide up all the loop-holes, besides knocking several walls down, a white flag appeared. Our men have learnt to take no notice of this however. The next shell made another white flag go up. After giving them a few minutes to see if they were going to walk out and surrender, which probably also meant a bullet, we sent a sixth shell. This was too much. The whole of the defenders rushed out with arms up in the air and without fire-arms into the Seaforths' trenches. An almost unique sight I should think, and one which shows the despondent spirit of the enemy. I fancy a good many more who could surrender decently would like to do so. The Seaforths took many prisoners that day, and gained much ground, and the 4th Division received the congratulations of General French for their fine fighting spirit, etc. This was brought about by a few well-placed shells by the 35th Battery R.F.A. which enabled the Seaforths to get round in rear. They would probably alone have never got over the ground without fearful casualties. Everywhere the Germans have left a track of misery, hatred, and famine. They seem to have done nothing in these parts but rob and steal and live on the people—when we come along they just retire until cornered. In one town the Germans left in the morning and we arrived late at night. Two Germans had hidden under a haystack in the field we came into action in. Their legs were seen sticking out; when pulled out, one of them said, " I 've come from London—damn War ! "

'The next morning the inhabitants crept out of their houses for the first time for fifteen days—the first time they had smiled, fed, taken their clothes off, or washed. This is a poor part, and people have to go out to fetch water, food, etc., daily. The roads were crowded with

refugees returning to the homes they had left—some to find smoking ruins, others a bare cupboard; but all thought of nothing but the one fact—"Les Anglais sont arrivés." For us they could not do too much—those who had any house left to offer placed all at our disposal. "Pour des gens comme vous, on fait tout ce qu'on peut" was the common cry. German orders to the troops, found in the field, say that the troops cannot depend on supplies from Germany, and they must live on the country. They have done so—cleared every café of all its wines, cigars, spirits; shops of all their groceries and food-stuffs; whilst every château and house bears undeniable signs of wanton destruction. What they couldn't take away they broke—even to mirrors and expensive china. This is not exceptional, but the general rule, and seems to have been done for no reason at all, except out of spite at not being able to reach Paris. The inhabitants have been left with nothing but the apples on the trees, walnuts, and potatoes, and one hears not a grumble, unless one asks them: "C'est la guerre!" The Germans here have met with no opposition and have had no fighting. They pushed as far as St. Omer and retired to Armentières when we came along. They have simply been here living on the country so as to economise in supplies. They will have to fight now, as we shall worry their communications if they let us get any farther. We were glad to get away from the Battle of the Aisne, and it's better the British Army being on its own. We were in the middle there, and co-operation with the French attacks never came off successfully. We had a trying march round to Compiègne; all marching had to be done at night, owing to aeroplanes, as the march of the whole British Army to a flank was rather a dangerous operation, as well as each unit's replacement by a French unit in the firing-line. From Compiègne we entrained via Abbeville and Calais to Hazebrouck owing to bridges being cut in the direct line. It is quite impossible to sleep at night owing to the rifles and cannon, and the sky so lit up by burning villages and homes. Some people prefer to stay in their homes—perhaps

they have nowhere to go to. But it 's a terrible thing to see women and children rushing out of their houses when a shell explodes in them. Nobody likes shelling a church either, but in these parts it 's the only place one can see from.'

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY

By Field-Marshal Sir John French, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G., *Commander-in-Chief, British Army in the Field*

General Headquarters,
October 16, 1914.

1. Having for 25 days successfully held the line of the river Aisne, between Soissons and Villiers, against the most desperate endeavours of the enemy to break through, that memorable battle has now been brought to a conclusion, so far as the British Forces are concerned, by the operation which has once more placed us on the left flank of the Allied Armies.

2. At the close of this important phase of the campaign I wish again to express my heart-felt appreciation of the services performed throughout this trying period by the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the British Field Forces in France.

3. Throughout nearly the whole of that 25 days a most powerful and continuous fire of artillery from guns of a calibre never used before in field operations covered and supported desperate infantry attacks made in the greatest strength and directed at all hours of the day and night on your position.

Although you were thus denied adequate rest and suffered great losses, in no one case did the enemy attain the slightest success, but was invariably thrown back with immense loss.

4. The powerful endurance of the troops was further greatly taxed by the cold and wet weather which prevailed during the greater part of the time.

5. Paragraph 2 of the Special Order of the Day, August 22, ran as follows :—

'All the regiments comprising the Expeditionary Force bear on their colours emblems and names which constantly remind them of glorious victories achieved by them in the past. I have the most complete confidence that those regiments, as they stand to-day in close proximity to the enemy, will not only

uphold the magnificent traditions of former days, but will add fresh laurels to their standards.'

I cannot convey what I feel with regard to the conduct of the troops under my command better than by expressing my conviction that they have justified that confidence well and nobly.

6. That confidence is everywhere endorsed by their fellow-countrymen, and whatever may be before the British Army in France, I am sure they will continue to follow the same glorious path till final and complete victory is attained.

(Sd.) J. D. P. French,
Commander-in-Chief,
The British Army in the Field.

'One of the biggest feats was the transfer of the entire British Army stationed at Braisne, between Soissons and Rheims—more than 200,000 of them—to St. Omer, a distance of about 70 miles, which was accomplished within three days.'[1]

This last paragraph refers to the move northwards mentioned in E.'s letter; not exactly true as regards the Artillery, which could not be moved so easily. It took them five days.

'*Oct.* 26, 35*th Battery R.F.A.* (Extract of Letter.)—I have just returned from burying a bombardier of ours, killed this morning during a little attention we received from a "Jack Johnson" Battery. Yesterday they put a Heavy Battery alongside us out of action, blowing up an ammunition waggon, and to-day they found us. The first shell, a 6-inch—pretty useful—cut the telephone wire to the Battery Commander observing in front, and so rendered us useless temporarily. Everybody crept into their holes alongside the guns, except a bombardier operator who went out to mend the wire and was unfortunately hit by a large fragment.

'There is no doubt, I think, that this is the work of spies. The Heavy Battery always gets found, and no one likes being near them.'

'*Oct.* 28.—Everything is going on satisfactorily I think.

[1] *Army and Navy Journal*, U.S.A.

The Germans have given up attacking us. The morning after that attack on us there were 400 dead picked up by us, not much more than 2500 yds. from our position. I am not having too bad a time. Only long hours, and no certainty of rest even at night, and always up at 4.30.'

'*Oct.* 31, 35*th Battery*. (Probably south of the Lys.)—Enclosed a little summary of information passed round to us, dated Oct. 24.

'The position of the 3rd Corps is unchanged.

'An attack was made on us yesterday, but did not succeed (the 4th Division belongs to the 3rd Corps). On advancing here we come into an area devastated by the Germans, and it won't be pleasant until we reach the frontier. The villages in front of our position and occupied by the Germans present a terrible picture, and I fancy most of the inhabitants must have perished.

'I am very fit myself, and don't seem to feel the cold or wet.'

CHAPTER X

Messines — Neuve Chapelle — Haig's Order, March 9 — Affair of Neuve Chapelle—Reasons of Failure—Attack on Aubers Ridge—Festubert — Wounded — Reasons of Failure — June Festivities—Instruction at School of Gunnery, Aire—Comments on Operations of Year—Opinions of other Officers.

'*Nov.* 6.—Since my last we have been detached northwards on some special mission, and have been pretty busy every day, and too many panic orders all through the night to get much repose. The Germans have been making desperate attempts to get through somewhere, and apparently have failed all along. Very difficult country all this—something like Essex—very cut up with hedges, farms, roads, etc., and hard to see. Everybody creeps about and digs holes to avoid the shells which fly about most of the day. At present I am writing in a very fine "château." It has been somewhat knocked about by shell-fire, as it is visible from the German position across the little river which separates us. As a rule we don't get "châteaux," as the General Staff usually occupy them. This one they got shelled out of, fortunately, so we are comfortable. Our Battery is in action just down by the orchard, and we come up here for dinner and leave it at breakfast—5 A.M. The road joining the house to the Battery is under fire at odd intervals. Last night at dinner-time a shrapnel took away most of the remaining windows on one side. It 's very nice to sit down at a table and have nice plates and cups and glasses to feed out of, and wine to drink, and really we are very comfortable ; and now the milk, butter, and chocolate have arrived we are doing ourselves well. I have fetched two mattresses down from the bedrooms, which aren't safe, to the lowest floor, and could sleep like anything if it wasn't for the interruptions through the night. We haven't made

much progress the last two weeks here—as we are only holding on very thinly—but there has been much slaughter done, and attacks and counter-attacks every day. Some villages round here present a terrible appearance. I wonder what the Mr. Brown of the "Englishman's" type would say if he could get a taste of war at his front door. In this château here, with its stock of domestic animals, model farm, workmen's cottages, summer-houses, lodges, everything that money can buy, one can see how the one idea of the people has been to get away and be safe. They don't seem to mind the loss of everything as long as they can get away and stay with some one else—their friends. The poorer people, of course, who have no friends to go to, as they say, hold up their hands and say, "Que voulez-vous?" when asked why they stop, and so we meet them in places with all their windows broken, the upper storey of their house blown away, and with shells flying round through the day, huddled up together in the "Cave" or cellars of their home, just calmly waiting till the evening to go up and get their food cooked. And all this they count as nothing compared to the return of the Germans. Gladly would they live like rats in their cellars as long as we stop with them, using what's left of their upper storeys for observation stations, and their kitchens for cooking—anything, so long as the Germans don't return. Such was the daily scene at Le Touquet—a village which has been the scene of severe fighting, but which we have never been able yet to completely occupy—the Germans still occupy the outside edge. Here in this château (which of course hasn't been visited by Germans, as nothing inside is broken and there is some wine left, and which is just about on the line where the British and German Forces met) everything seems to have been left just as in peace time—the fowls and chicks running about expecting some one to feed them, which never happens, beautiful dogs in kennels pining for food which never arrives, while the cattle were still tied up in the farm we use as an observation station. A shell came in and killed two, and the remainder have wandered off to look

after themselves. In the château here everything seems to show the people had never thought of the Germans reaching this part, and then they probably heard they were approaching, and fled without waiting to see to anything—even locking the door of their wine-cellar. The children's toys in the nursery are still left out as if they had just been playing with them.'

'*Nov.* 23.—It is just three weeks ago since we left for northward. I have just got back for a few days out of the firing-line to re-fit, re-equip, wash, and overhaul everything, only just in time as far as I am concerned, for I had developed a cold that got worse and worse, and on arrival here I went to bed for one day, and to-day am up, but not out, sore throat, etc. It will be a few days before I am much use again. I was most fearfully fit, and then the château I think I told you of was our home—the basement part of it—was at last struck by German shells. They have been all round it for several weeks, for the upper part from the first storey upwards is clearly visible from the German position near Messines. It was a wretched day, snow and wind, and I had come in to get some food, when we felt several shells strike the upper part or tower. We thought nothing of it until a telephone message from the Battery said smoke and flames were issuing from the top. We rushed up with pots and pails of water to try and put it out, but with a gale blowing and the woodwork well alight we hadn't a chance; it was a case of "sauve qui peut." After we had got all our things out into the rain, including mattresses, blankets, etc., I tried to get out as much of the owner's belongings as possible on to the lawn—valuable furniture, pottery, piano, etc.—during which process I went through many shades of temperature. It was well after dark when I had finished, and we prepared to instal ourselves in the Lodge for the night. After some dinner I returned with a party to see if the fire was enough subdued to put the things in for the night, fearing they might be looted. Our living room in the basement, which had iron girders for the roof, seemed likely to withstand everything,

so we put the furniture, piano, etc., all in there for the night. In the morning we found the iron girders and all had fallen in and destroyed everything. All this was Messines way. We have now been relieved there and come down south again to where we were before, but I had to lay up for a day or so, with a go of Flu and sore throat, etc., as a result, and I am just getting over it. It has been terribly cold the last week, the whole country is ice. I may be able, if all goes well, to run across for a few days later on. I can't say at all if I shall be leaving this Battery, so go on sending things as before. I can let you know at once if I move. Whilst on this last trip north my old Colonel, who was a Major at Ewshot in 1900 with me, selected me for a special job that wanted doing urgently. I had to work within 200 yards of the German trenches, and I was at it a week, being missed by yards only most of the day by shells, etc., and as a result have heard from the General R.A. that he has sent up my name to the Divisional for "Distinguished service in the field." Of course, this doesn't mean that I shall necessarily get anything, but it 's a start.'

Capt. Steel had been promoted in October, but he did not hear of it till later. He got 10 days' leave, and came home in December, and meanwhile his former Commander left the Battery (Major, now Lt.-Col., Koebel).

ORDER OF THE DAY

35th Battery

The G.O.C. wishes to congratulate the 4th Division most heartily on the tactical skill and fine fighting spirit shown by all ranks in to-day's successful operations. The news all round is excellent, and as the Indian troops are expected to arrive in line within the next few days, there should be every chance of a successful termination to the present situation. He feels sure that the 4th Division will continue to-morrow the good work they have done to-day.

A. A. Montgomery,
Lt.-Col., General Staff, 4th Division.

Nieppe, 20/10/14.

'35TH BATTERY R.F.A., 4TH DIVISION,
'*December* 31, 1914.

'I got back last night about 11 P.M. I don't like the journey from Boulogne to here over cobbled roads for ten hours a bit. I am now definitely in command of this Battery, so this is my home for some time to come. I only wish that I had known before leaving, as I should have arranged for lots of things. I think I did nearly everything I wanted to, and forgot nothing.'

1915

'*Jan.* 18.—Just a line by one of my Sergeants coming home on leave. Would you please try and get for me a black tin Despatch Box, *just like that* of mine at home with the stamps in it—not the deeper one that came back from Havre, but the new one I left with you when I went to the Congo. I want one to keep confidential papers in, and we have nothing in the Battery.'

'*Jan.* 21.—Would you send me by Parcel Post my Pierrot Costume complete, dark blue trousers, jacket, skull cap, and Pierrot cap, and also professor's hat and cloak, which should be in my cardboard hat-box. Then could you take my banjo [1] to Harrod's to see it is all right, extra strings to be

[1] The banjo has quite a little history of its own that may as well be told here :—

The precise instructions given by Major Steel were not carried out because on account of submarines the boat and specified train were delayed, and it became necessary to try and get it delivered to some returning N.C.O. from home. Our cook, Miss Hamlin, whose brother was serving with R.E., and who was interested in the adventure, made several attempts to catch a returning N.C.O. at Victoria, but for various reasons they all failed, and it was consigned, carefully packed, to the Shipping Agency as it was too heavy for parcel post. In April it was still undelivered, and the exact date of its arrival has not been recorded owing to the transfer of the Battery from the 4th Division. It had gone to that Division, and in May was discovered and reached its destination in June. When Major Steel returned in September 15 he brought it with him ; he did not take it out again in the spring of 1916 ; in July he wrote and asked to have it sent out through the M.F.O., Southampton. After he was wounded in September 1916 on the Somme the Battery was suddenly moved away, and, along with other of his property which was never heard of again, the banjo disappeared,

put in, and put in a box, and taken by special messenger to Victoria Station, S.E. & C.R., to catch the 8.30 A.M. boat train to Folkestone on the morning of 28th January, and it must be handed over by this messenger to Sergeant Cummings or Dyer or Ridgers to bring to me. Lastly, some banjo music which is in the top of my large tin box (uniform).

'The R.A. Divisional Follies are being started, and when each Battery retires for its fortnightly rest, entertainments will be given.'

'*Jan.* 30.—The music and Fancy Dress arrived this evening. My best thanks for all your trouble.'

'*Feb.* 14.—The horses and waggon line are all back there now, and we take it in turns to be with them. Only I have been very busy preparing Observing Stations for our new position here. The "Divisional Follies" have started, and have been giving two performances a night in a Cinema Theatre not very far back from the firing-line, and have been a great boon to the men when relieved from their turn in the trenches.

'I saw Sealy had been wounded. I hope not badly.[1]

and it was not till 1917 it was discovered by his cousin, Major Clive Mellor, R.E., at Bethune and sent home.

Major Steel did not take it to Mespot, as things seemed uncertain (September 1918), and meantime the banjo had rested packed at the Pall Mall Forwarding Agency, Carlton Street, and to the manager Major Steel (now Lt.-Col.) wrote asking to have it sent to Basra. Meanwhile his plans were altered, and when in January he was under orders for Vladivostok he cabled to send the banjo thither, but it had already been despatched in consequence of his directions to the Shipping Agency at Avonmouth for Basra. However, a Government agency such as it was did not move in a great hurry, and by means of the telegraph the manager of the aforesaid agency managed to get its destination transferred to Vladivostok.

When Lt.-Col. Steel arrived at Vladivostok, and was wandering about the wharves waiting for a train to convey him to Omsk, he spied his banjo being unloaded from the *Carmarthen* with a quantity of guns and Artillery stores for the B.M.M. and he rescued it and took it off with him, and in the wilds of Siberia it was a constant companion till his death, when it was carefully packed by Major Cameron and forwarded to his mother.

[1] Lt. E. M. Sealy, R.E., who was with him on the Rhodesia-Congo B.C., a very promising officer and general favourite, was seriously wounded early in the war, came home and apparently recovered, but later his wound broke out and caused his death.

As regards the Burberry Tent, I am expecting it to be invaluable later on; in fact, as soon as we start moving I must order a mattress for it. The weather here is very bad again, and I think I am developing rheumatics. Continual wet feet. We are very busy preparing for the spring now. I hope we shall get a move on, or that the Germans will. Both sides seem quite happy facing each other.'

'*Feb.* 28.—Since my last we have had another move, and are temporarily with the 8th Division down by Neuve Chapelle—rather annoying, being shifted out of the part we were becoming experts in. This is the second change in two weeks.'

'*March* 9.—I 've not had a moment for anything the last two weeks. We are on the eve of some movement, I hope success, and I do everything myself. We don't like the change to this 8th Division much—one of the newly constituted ones which seems to get nothing and have nothing in the same working order as the 4th.'

On March 9 Sir Douglas Haig issued the following Special Order to the First Army:—

In front of us we have only one German Corps spread out on a front as large as that occupied by the whole of our Army (the First).

We are now about to attack with about forty-eight battalions a locality in that front which is held by some three German battalions. It seems probable also that for the first day of the operations the Germans will not have more than four battalions available as reinforcements for the counter-attacks. Quickness of movement is, therefore, of first importance to enable us to forestall the enemy and thereby gain success without severe loss.

At no time in this war has there been a more favourable moment for us, and I feel confident of success. The extent of that success must depend on the rapidity and determination with which we advance.

Although fighting in France, let us remember that we are fighting to preserve the British Empire and to protect our homes against the organised savagery of the German Army.

To ensure success each one of us must play his part, and fight like men for the honour of Old England.

The affair of Neuve Chapelle, at first announced as a victory, was really one of the greatest blunders of the campaign. One correspondent,[1] and the only one who gave any reasonable explanation, wrote :—

'Weeks passed before the occurrences of that fateful day were made clear to me. Every sort of rumour[2] was afloat. On the 10th and 11th I was between Merville (where General Haig had his headquarters), Estaires, and Laventie, but no one seemed to know in those days as to just why things had gone so badly when the promise of success had been so great.

'Later I knew.

'General Haig had been quite reasonably correct in his estimate of the enemy's strength. Our chance to break through the German line was the finest opportunity of the whole war.

'That with such odds in our favour, with a preponderance of guns and shells as well, we should have failed so signally, and lost over 18,000 men into the bargain, required some explanation.

[1] Frederic Coleman, *With Cavalry*.

[2] These rumours emanated from persons ignorant of the real cause of the disaster to account for the failure ; it needs to be emphasised that the attack, for reasons stated (p. 101), failed on the first day, and everything that occurred on the three following days was useless slaughter. One of these rumours, viz. that the Artillery had fired into their own troops, arose from ignorance of any elementary knowledge of the scientific co-operation of Artillery and Infantry in an attack—and it is to be feared also of the Brigade Commanders and their Staffs. In order to secure this co-operation by means of the barrage and limited objective (or, as Mr., now Sir, P. Gibbs calls it, the time-table system), it is essential that the Brigade Commanders should not only understand their instructions, but that their Staffs should see that they are carried out. When the complete history of this war comes to be written, it will be found that many blunders resulted from the same causes ; but as to Neuve Chapelle it seems that the Infantry did not stop at the line arranged but proceeded into Neuve Chapelle. It is not quite so clear what the actual arrangement was, but if any casualties occurred on this account they were no doubt exaggerated at the time because every one was searching for a scapegoat.

GROUP OF OFFICERS 35TH BATTERY, AT COMPIÈGNE, OCT. 1914.
Lieut. Deacon. Lieut. Agnew. Lieut. Phillips. Maj. Koebel.

GROUP OF MEN 35TH BATTERY, AT COMPIÈGNE, OCT. 1914.

Signalling Station, Festubert, April 1915.

Signalling Station, Fromelles, April 1915.

Facing p. 101.

'The tragedy of Neuve Chapelle was a failure to take advantage of an initial success. The 25th Brigade, with the 23rd Brigade on its left, nobly did the work assigned to it. It took Neuve Chapelle itself, and reached the position it had hoped to reach. The 24th Brigade was to come up, through the 23rd and 25th Brigades, and as it advanced the 20th Brigade, on its left, was to move forward. Still to the left of the 20th Brigade the 21st Brigade was in readiness, and on its left the Northamptonshire Yeomanry, which had been put into the trenches previously occupied by the 20th Brigade, to free the command for the attack.

'Thus, once the preliminary ground clearing was done by the 23rd and 25th Brigades on the right, and the town of Neuve Chapelle was taken, the 24th Brigade was to come on and form the right of a line composed of itself, the 20th and 21st Brigades, which were to pivot on the Northamptonshire Yeomanry and sweep over the Aubers Ridge.

'On the left of the Yeomanry waited the 22nd Brigade, ready to jump forward the moment this swinging movement had developed.

'The initial success won, the whole line waited, eyes on the right, for the signal to go on. Before nine o'clock in the morning all was ready, and the road cleared.

'All day the watchers waited in vain.

'It was after four o'clock in the afternoon before the word came.

'It was then too late.

'The great opportunity had been lost, and lost for ever.

'The Germans had rallied, filled farms with machine-guns, and mowed down the gallant 23rd and 25th Brigades men who had won such splendidly advanced positions.'[1]

On this point General French wrote: 'I am of opinion that this delay would not have occurred had the clearly expressed order of the G.O. Commanding First Army been

[1] See also Major Steel's report of March 10 (p. 102). The preponderance of shells is incorrect.

more carefully observed, or had the G.O.C. IV. Corps been able to bring up his reserve brigades more speedily into action.'

One explanation was that the Reserve Brigade had to march some distance to their station and were too tired to advance, and it was asserted at the time that there was no transport available. This again was contradicted; and we were told with equal confidence that transport was ready but was not allowed to be used for the purpose.

Whatever may have been the cause of that delay in bringing up the reserves on the first day of the attack, it seems clear that all the correspondence and rumours that were afloat were merely attempts to excuse the failure to make good on the following day, and threw no light on the initial blunder, which, so far as the public is concerned, has not yet been explained.

'*March* 10.—After the first phase of the bombardment was over, the Infantry to our front advanced and the Battery turned on to the trenches in front of the Pagoda as arranged. The Infantry did not stop at the German First Line but proceeded on to Neuve Chapelle. I accordingly proceeded there, and made my Observing Station in the Brewery. No Germans were seen this side of the Bois de Biez till the end part of the afternoon, when they came on in some force down from Le Rusie, turned off to their right, and assembled in and behind the many small houses between the corner of the wood and H. 98. Here they were shelled with so much effect that they scattered and made a bit of a counter-attack, it seems, between 93 and 85 on our left. They also proceeded to take up and improve a trench between 93 and 95, which was shelled steadily until 5.15 P.M., after which firing ceased for the day.'

'*March* 24. (Extract of Letter received 26th.)—'I have not had much time for letter-writing lately. However, now the Battle of Neuve Chapelle is over I have come back to my waggon line. I have sent my Captain up to the guns for a few days for a change from the W. line. Of the

battle itself, which went on for five days and nights, you have probably read lots. Believe very little of what you read about it, except that when the Artillery was behind them the Infantry advanced, when they had not got a hundred guns behind them they didn't do anything. So it 's a poor look-out for the future unless we get about ten times the amount of ammunition we can get at present (thanks to the strikes). As the whole attack practically took place under my eyes one gets rather sick of the soldiers' letters in the *Daily Mail*, and what Sergt. —— of the A.S.C. thinks who was probably nowhere near. The 35th Battery took a leading part, and if the others had done the same we should now have the Aubers Ridge. I send you a copy of my short Report.[1]

'Since the 15th we have been consolidating our position, and I spend most of my time sneaking about Neuve Chapelle, whilst when it gets dusk the repairing of the various look-out places I have made has to be done. My main Observing Station is the only house left with walls more than 10 feet high.

'Want of water will be a serious question when we advance beyond the area of ruins we have just entered. The water stinks, water carts are all broken, and no more available from home yet. They manage to raise a few in working order for the Infantry in the advanced trenches.'

'35th Battery R.F.A., IVth Corps,
'*April* 18, 1915.

'On arrival I found the Battery had joined 7th Division, and to-morrow we join 8th Division. However, we shall now remain with the IVth Corps for a while. I went to catch the 8.15 A.M. train, but was told it was not going, and was kept waiting about, and then, finally, was told to go by the 3 o'clock train by the Railway Transport Officer, which ran in conjunction with a supply train to La Gorgne, the new rail-head, which was very convenient. I didn't mean to take Fancy Dress, as I thought we should be getting to work on

[1] Major Steel's report of March 10 (p. 102), written evidently in ignorance of the cause of failure.

arrival. But I see no signs of anything big. Now that I have got a piano I propose having sing-songs at the guns these moonlight evenings, just to cheer everybody up. It is most trying and monotonous this continual watching and waiting.'

Maurice Phillips,[1] transferred on promotion to Captain to 31st Battery, was killed near Festubert on May 22, and buried in the British Cemetery at Le Touquet the same evening.

'35TH BATTERY R.F.A., *May* 2, 1915.

'Thanks for yours of 28th. We have not gone up north The other two Batteries have gone, but General Holland wouldn't let us go. It has upset all our plans here. However, the Concert arrangements are being carried on between the firing. The music and everything has arrived except the Banjo. This may turn up at last. It was rather unfortunate we should have left the 4th Division just as it arrived, and I believe it is still there.

'We have had glorious weather here, but I wish we had more ammunition!'

'35TH BATTERY R.F.A., *May* 18, 191[illegible].

'We have been pretty well made use of lately, for directly after the attack on the Aubers-Fromelles Ridge, which was hardly a success, we were pulled out and sent down here, near Festubert, with 7th Division, to try to do something. We have been at it three days now. It is very disheartening work with our present Infantry. The day before yesterday we had rather a hot time. I had a fine Observing Station in a ruined Brewery 100 yards behind our trenches, and was able to put my shells anywhere I liked, and the Infantry ought to have got La Bassée, but! (the attack failed), and we have only just got on a bit. I got hit by some pieces of shrapnel in the morning whilst mending a telephone wire and in the evening another one burst at the feet of two of my best men I have always in front with me to go on dangerous errands, blew them to pieces, whilst my Subaltern

[1] Originally Lt. in 35th Battery (see p. 80).

got a couple of holes bored in him, and I got a piece or so in the face which has made me feel rather as if I had been in a prize fight. My Subaltern has been sent home, but I shall be all right, I hope, in a day or two. At Fromelles I got a bullet through my hat, and it just touched my head as it went through, so I can't have anything much nearer. Where is Kitchener's Army ? We never seem to have more than a handful of men to do anything. They seem to disappear directly any German fires a shot at them.'

On May 20th a War Office telegram was received, containing the single word 'Wounded.'

Referring to the attack on the Aubers Ridge May 9, 1915, the correspondent already quoted wrote : 'The attack was to be made from S.W. by two Indian Divisions and from the N.W. by the 7th and 8th Divisions, while the 6th Division was pushed forward to be ready if the attack proved successful.

'Instructions had been given in anticipation of any misunderstandings that might tend to another fiasco like the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. The Order of the Day asked the troops to " break a hole in the enemy's lines." '

Later, the same correspondent wrote : 'Early in the morning word had come that the 8th Division had made a splendid beginning, but later in the afternoon we heard that the other Division had been held up by machine-gun fire and had made no progress. On the 11th G.H.Q. remarked laconically that there was " nothing to report from the First Army Front." So the big attack of which my gunner friends along the Fromelles Road had such high hopes—fizzled out.'

'35TH BATTERY R.F.A., *May* 28, 1915.

'I am back at duty now, fit and well, except for my jaw, which does not admit of the maximum limit at present, but that is only stiffness and will wear off. We are now out of action for the moment in reserve between Choques and Villers, and it is very pleasant, in a way, to see green fields and farms after the ruins we have been living in,

but we don't seem to be getting on much. I forgot to tell you how useful the sleeping tent has been (see *ante*, 14/2/15), and with the air mattress I had bought for it I was pretty comfortable.'

'35TH BATTERY R.F.A., *June* 6, 1915.

'We are now back in action near Festubert again and having ideal weather, though I'm afraid we shan't do much. We are too short of ammunition to keep it up.'

'35TH BATTERY R.F.A., *June* 14, 1915.

'The Major of the 31st is a splendid pianist, and I've got a very fine piano. We shall be making another push, I hope, within 48 hours, if the ammunition arrives.'

During this period the question of distribution of honours was much discussed, and the proportion that had been allotted to Staff Officers, many of whom had never been nearer the fighting line than G.H.Q., was very severely canvassed both in letters from Regimental Officers and in the newspapers. The D.S.O. was instituted for the express purpose of rewarding distinguished conduct at the Front or in presence of the enemy, and its award to men who had never been near the Front caused widespread discontent among Regimental Officers, and examples were freely discussed not only in the Press but in general society. Some newspapers and extracts bearing on this subject were sent to Major Steel and elicited the following remarks :—

'35TH BATTERY R.F.A., *June* 27, 1915.

'It is too sickening to see D.S.O. given to people who have never been out of an office. I haven't met a Regimental Officer who isn't disgusted. If we don't do something soon I shall be quite ashamed of calling myself a soldier. A Special Report went in by my Colonel after the Festubert operations, but I don't suppose I shall get anything more. The British Army is now in a state of chaos. Entire reorganisation. So don't put Division or Corps any more.

'We have just moved again. New targets and country, and more Observation Stations to make. The country

now is swarming with flies and mosquitoes, making everything unpleasant. I am not expecting the war to begin seriously till next April. I don't know at all when I shall be coming home—I am ready now, for I can't see any prospect of an advance.'

'35TH BATTERY R.F.A., *July* 16, 1915.

'I am expecting to be relieved soon, so may be home at the end of the month. The Major of 31st is also coming home, so there will be none left who started in this Brigade.'

'35TH BATTERY R.F.A., *July* 28, 1915.

'. . . During this inactivity we have managed to give a few concerts, the 37th Brigade Pierrot Troupe ending up with a full house in the theatre at Bethune. We arrived in a motor bus, and a shell at once broke two windows of it when we 'd got out. The four ladies in our troupe were still quaking with fear in the cellar when the time bell went, and had to be hauled out, though a bit pale, and soon forgot all about it. They have since all handed in their resignations and costumes, and refuse to act any more within range of the gunners. It was a first-class show, and I have got back all the £20—the original outlay of costumes, etc.'

PROGRAMME

37TH BRIGADE R.F.A. PIERROTS, SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE, 1915

Price, 20 Centimes.

At 8.45 the Curtain Rises
(without the aid of BAKING POWDER)

Accompanist . . . MAJOR M. HARTLAND-MAHON, R.F.A.

1. The Inevitable Opening Chorus ('Lindy Loo')	.	EVERY ONE.
2. *Song* . . 'Ragtime Goblin Man'	.	SERGT. HANNA.
3. *Song* . . . 'My Old Shako' .	.	SERGT. STUTTLE.
4. *Comic* . . . 'Selected' .	.	DRIVER GARLAND.
5. *Song* . . 'Le Credo du Paysan'	.	M. LEFEVRE. MLLE. J. BRAS. MLLE. J. THERY.

6. *Song* . . . 'My Orange Girl' . . SERGT. RIDGERS.
7. *Comic* . . . 'Selected' . . MAJOR STEEL.

Interval 10 Minutes.
(Scotch Time.)

8. Another Opening Chorus . . . . . EVERY ONE.
(*For no Reason at all*)
'Mother's sitting knitting Mittens'
9. *Song* . . 'All Aboard for Dixie Land' . SERGT. HANNA.
BOMB. GREY.
10. *Song* . . 'I hear you calling me' . SERGT. PUZEY.
11. *Comic* . . 'Selected' . . MAJOR STEEL.
12. *Song* . . 'Everybody's in Slumberland' . SERGT. RIDGERS.
13. *Song* . . 'I want to go to India' . SERGT. STUTTLE.
14. *Comic* . . . 'Selected' . . DRIVER GARLAND.
'I want to be in Dixie'

MARSEILLAISE. GOD SAVE THE KING.

At ten THE CURTAIN FALLS beating
THE VICTORIA FALLS
INTO FITS.

'*August* 5, 1915.

'No sign of my relief. In fact, he seems to have got lost—so I don't know when I shall get home. I am going to "Aire" to do gunnery instructor to some class of three-pounder guns on armoured cars for a short time.'

'*August* 15, 1915.

'The school at Aire, of which I am in charge, has been extended to August 20. I don't quite know what will happen. I may get called for another job; if so, I shall try and get a week's leave. I hope the summer will not be over. I have to write several reports.'

'*August* 21, 1915.

'I am leaving Aire to-morrow for my Battery, which is near Festubert, and I may get away about the 25th or 28th I hope. The boats are not crossing, I hear, for a few days owing to submarines. However, I believe I arrive in London about 4 P.M.'

At the close of this, the first period of service, it may be convenient to summarise a few points that emerge from

GROUP OF OFFICERS 35TH BATTERY, AUGUST 1915.

Standing—Lieut. Cator, Lieut. Scott.
Sitting—Lieut. Reynolds, Maj. E. A. Steel, Capt. Agnew.

Facing p. 108.

GROUP OF 'NO. 1'S' OF GUNS AND BATTERY ARTIFICER, MAY 1915.

*Facing p.*1

these extracts so far as they contain matter for history, coming as they do from a man of wide experience and, generally speaking, sound judgment; and perhaps they are more important because Major Steel was fully aware of the value of Infantry, and held strong views as to the assistance they should receive from the Artillery, and how each branch was inter-dependent on the other, and should keep in touch so as to assist each other in every possible way.

While on the Aisne during October and November 1914 he had ample opportunity of observing the conduct of the Infantry, and his unstinted praises of their methods of attack showed that he had taken advantage of his opportunities, and that his opinion was the result of his own observation. It deserves to be repeated: 'Our own Infantry are first class. . . . Some Regiments are nearly all reservists now, but their excellent system of training soon polishes up the ignorant, and the "shikar" spirit which is inculcated in their attack methods is a fine sight.'

Passing on to the affair of Neuve Chapelle, it will be observed that his report coincides with that of the correspondent quoted as to the delay in bringing up the supports until the evening, and consequently giving the Germans time to bring up strong forces and cause the initial success to become a disaster. (See Staff, p. 110.)

Again at Festubert (p. 104), when he was in an equally good position to judge, his opinion seems to indicate that the Infantry on that occasion were, as a mobile force, undoubtedly in a different class from those of the old Expeditionary Force on the Aisne. This would cause no surprise but for the fact that there was a conspiracy in all the daily journals of the time, to refrain from extolling deeds of valour of individuals or regiments,[1] while representing as victories what were in truth disasters. The men were splendid, indeed the flower of our manhood, but they lacked at that time the training in combined movements

[1] There was one exception to this—a periodical started by Mr. T. P. O'Connor entitled *Great Deeds*, whose publication ceased through lack of support.

which alone could give them confidence in their leaders. Now that history is being written, it may be hoped that the truth will be told, and indeed it is being told (see *Realities of War*, by Philip Gibbs,[1] p. 66). When the new Army first came out to learn their lesson in the trenches in the long days before open warfare, the enemy had the best of it in every way, and it may be elicited that both leaders and led suffered from similar causes, and the confidence described by General French in his first despatch had not been kept up to the same high standard. This has been repeatedly observed by our enemy commander, and it may now be admitted that during 1915 our newly trained battalions, when confronted with the highly trained and frequently more numerous forces of the enemy, did not develop the powers of attack that our panegyrists depicted. Major Steel devoted much of his attention to the matter of Observing Stations, to which he attached special importance, and for which his previous experience had especially fitted him; and though some may have thought that he was incurring unnecessary risk, others, and among them his superiors, realised the advantages.

General Holland writes: 'I am convinced that our Artillery will do no good until we get Battery Commanders well forward in all these attacks.'

See also Ludendorff, i. 273: 'The decisive value of Artillery observation and the consequent necessity of paying great attention to the situation of position had also become apparent.'

As to the Staff, the original Expeditionary Force had no doubt been equipped with a highly trained Staff, as efficient as mere peace-training could make it, but as Divisions multiplied and fresh Army Corps came into existence, the provision of Staff Officers became a serious question. The correspondent already quoted, referring to the disaster of Neuve Chapelle (see p. 100), writes: 'No battle of such magnitude could be won without fine Staff

[1] Now Sir Philip Gibbs, K.B.E.

work, and the work of more than one Staff on that 10th March left much to be desired.'

'And again, when the immensity of casualties among British troops,' writes Philip Gibbs, 'was out of all proportion to their gains of ground, our men's spirits revolted against these massacres of their youth, and they were embittered against the generalship and Staff work which directed these sacrificial actions' (*Realities of War*, p. 35).

'This sense became intense to the point of fury, so that a young Staff Officer in his red tabs with a jaunty manner was like a red rag to a bull among battalions of officers and men' (p. 35).

And again, referring to the Battle of Flanders: 'I found a general opinion among officers and men . . . that they had been the victims of atrocious Staff work, tragic in its consequences. . . .' (p. 389).

In the two cases alluded to, viz. Neuve Chapelle and Festubert, 1915, Major Steel formed the opinion that after the failure of the initial attack in both cases all that followed was useless slaughter.

And he was not alone in that opinion, for since then the following has been written: 'The battles of Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, and Loos, 1915, cost us thousands of casualties, and gave us no gain of any account, and both generalship and Staff work were, in the opinion of most officers who know anything of those battles, ghastly' (*Realities of War*, p. 36).

And indeed it was an open secret that instead of selecting Staff Officers for qualities denoting efficiency, they were too frequently selected for other and totally different reasons.

Major Steel had qualifications for a Staff Officer second to none. I believe his name was sent up in response to a spasmodic effort to wipe out the character of imbecility that was becoming associated with the brass hat. Those interested in such researches may discover in these few lines why he was not selected.

With regard to the distribution of honours (p. 106), Major Steel merely echoes what has been said wherever fighting

men congregated throughout the war. We can all remember the shock we experienced at the huge list of Staff Officers that headed our first despatches before we came to the fighting men.

The D.S.O. was a prized decoration. The Statutes of the Order define the conditions on which it was intended to be bestowed, and it is common knowledge that the distinction has lost much of its value. Nobody, least of all a soldier, would grudge an adequate reward being given to non-combatants or Staff Officers whose duties may confine them to G. or other H.Q.; but surely it is unreasonable to do so at the expense of the man who risks his life; and this is actually what happens when so many members are introduced into an Order intended strictly for combatants.

'I know an Officer,' writes Gibbs, 'who was awarded the D.S.O. because he had hindered the work of industrious men with the zeal of a hedge sparrow in search of worms. And another, etc. . . .' (*Realities of War*, p. 26).

The objection is not met by calling the writer a disgruntled war correspondent, because cases of this distinction formed the topic of conversation in every mess-room. Eventually this came to be recognised, but the amendment when it came, in August 1918, came too late.

In this respect it would seem that our enemy suffered from the same cause (Ludendorff, i. 262): 'I should like to have seen at the head of the Military Cabinet men who had real personal experience of the fighting, so that we could rely on them to do justice to the Corps of Officers. As it was, this body worked too closely on its peace-time routine and did not bring strong character to the front.'

I have already quoted Gen. Holland as to the question of Battery Commanders, and I wrote asking him if he had any objection to my making use of it. He writes: 'I had very great admiration for your son, he was a man of enormous energy and enthusiasm, and what is more, having no great love for beaten tracks, progressed on original lines; it was this trait in his character that attracted me so forcibly,

together with the knowledge which grew as I came to know him, of what a loyal nature he had.'

See my note on Staff, p. 110. Gen. Holland has touched the spot. In a world where, as Swift said, 'climbing and crawling were performed in much the same attitude,' it may be that one of independent judgment was not required at G.H.Q.

Leaving the foregoing digressions, I return more particularly to the character of the subject of this Memoir as portrayed during war by his comrades, senior and junior.

Lt.-Gen. Holland, commanding Infantry Corps, wrote :—

'Lt.-Col. E. A. Steel, R.F.A., served under me in France as a Battery Commander. I saw a good deal of this officer, and have the very highest opinion of him. He has great ability, and this, backed by untiring energy, foresight, and courage, rendered him a most valuable Commander. He is intensely loyal, and nothing is too much trouble or too difficult for him to carry out the wishes of Superior Officers.'

Lt.-Col. M. Hartland-Mahon wrote :—

'R.A. Mess, Colchester,
'*January* 23, 1920.

'. . . The period during which I was most closely associated with your son was from October 1914 to August 1915, when I came home to train a new Battery. We were in many a show together. Your son was one of the most remarkable men I ever met. He had a perfect genius for discovering O.P.'s and constructing them, and he was never satisfied till he could get bang up to really within a few yards of the enemy's front trench. Two of his O.P.'s, one the "barrel house" on Hill 63 near Ploegsteert, the other his tree near Festubert, were marvels of ingenuity and were quite celebrated; there were many others.

'He performed countless feats of the utmost value and importance to the Infantry, whom he always tried, and successfully, to help to the utmost of his power. His main amusement when not doing a shoot from some O.P.

which most of us trembled to go near was wandering round the front line of trenches. His bravery was proverbial and almost amounted to recklessness.

'He was idolised by his own men, as well as by those outside his Battery to whom he was equally well known. While in the 37th Brigade (during the above period) he organised a Brigade Pierrot Troupe of which I was a member. He was the life and soul of it; he was equally good with the banjo or singing or reciting. I could tell one or two good stories about our performances, but I fear I have trespassed too long on your patience.

'But I shall be most interested and delighted to have any details of his career which you may care to send me, as you so kindly offered to do. He was a most fascinating personality, and any account of his career cannot fail to be of absorbing interest. Again assuring you of my sympathy.'

Brig.-Gen. Spedding wrote :—

'BERLIN, *May* 31, 1920.

'MY DEAR COLONEL,—I was very grieved to hear of your son's death in Siberia; he was under my command in France in 1914-1915, and I certainly never had a more gallant hard-working officer. His nerves were of iron. He was with me in many fights, and I could give you many accounts of his doings. One will perhaps suffice for the present. In the attack at Festubert in June 1915 he was observing for his Battery in a very well-known exposed Observation Post called "The Brewery." He was twice wounded in the day, and his Subaltern who was with him came down wounded late in the day to say his Major was still there wounded and would not come away. When fetched away he was found attending to his two telephonists, who had just been killed. Trees were his great speciality as Observation Posts; he used to half-cut through two or three trees and lay them together and erect his Observation Post at the top of a series of three ladders. Some day I shall hope to come and see you and tell you more about him.

'At Neuve Chapelle he was through the village with the first Infantry with his wires and telephonists. He is a great loss to the Regiment.'

Lt.-Col. J. Ramsden wrote :—

'Your son and I served together in L Battery R.H.A. for some years in India. Although we never met again I was able to follow his work in Africa, and I well remember the tree at Festubert where he continued to command his Battery after the ladder by which he communicated with the ground had been cut away by shell-fire. He has died in harness the death of the true knight in the King's service, *sans peur et sans reproche.*'

Colonel G. Mair wrote :—

'I hope you will allow me to offer you my deepest sympathy on the loss of your son, which I was so sorry to read about. He was a great loss not only to the Royal Regiment but to the Army generally, and it seemed very hard, after going through the war in France, to have died in Russia. I just missed seeing him in France, once when he was commanding a Battery on the Somme in Sept. 1916, and later when he was in command of a Brigade.'

CHAPTER XI

Return to England—Training New Artillery—Return to France, April 1916—Dangerously Wounded on Somme, September 15—King Edward VII. Hospital—Convalescent—Lecture to Royal Geographical Society—Reported Fit for Light Duty, April 1918.

In October 1915 Major Steel and several other officers of similar standing and special qualifications were ordered home for the purpose of training the new Batteries that had been recently recruited.

These Batteries, of which the men were keen and interested in their work, were brigaded at Tidworth Camp in September, and October onwards near Codford, where, with the exception of a course of gun-firing on Salisbury Plain and another course at Lydd, they remained through the winter of 1915, and in February 1916 they were ordered to France.

The training of these men was of exceptional interest. I am sorry that I have not been able to collect more information as to their several trades and occupations before enlistment. Major Steel found them extraordinarily keen and anxious to learn their work, and that they took full advantage of their training is fully borne out by the good work they did in France.

Major Steel's remark in his letter of July 4, 1916, when, after recounting the disadvantages of their position, he said, 'However, a good Battery makes up for a lot,' shows what he thought of them; and whenever we met during the training he frequently commented on the keenness of the men.

When on the point of leaving, early in February, he went to Yorkshire to say 'Good-bye' to the family of Sir John Barran; while on the road a Zeppelin attack occurred, and his train was held up at a siding all night. He returned with a feverish cold, and his doctor refused to let him go

with the Battery, which went without him under the command of Lt. S. Collingwood on February 17.

This Battery of 182nd Brigade R.F.A. was formed and recruited at Hurlingham, H.Q. being at Fulham Town Hall. The Brigade Commander was Col. Shortt (a retired R.A. Captain), and Sir Henry Norris, the then Mayor, raised the Brigade.[1] The horses were stabled in the polo stables, the men being billeted in the neighbourhood, as far as possible in their own homes.

Their first Divisional Commander was General Sir Lawrence Parsons, retired, and their Divisional Artillery Commander Brig.-Gen. Duffus.

From Fulham they went to Deep Cut, where Major Steel took over command of the Battery, and from there to Borden.

'BOYTON, *October* 11, 1915.

'We march to-morrow to huts at Corton, near Warminster, Wilts. My address will be 182nd Brigade, Corton, Upton Lovell, Wilts; Railway Station, Codford.'

'182ND BRIGADE, *December* 18, 1915.

'We go to shoot on the Plain, January 5.'

1916

'*January* 17, 1916.

'We got back from Salisbury Plain last Friday, where we did not do very well. But considering they have only had about a month's real training it wasn't too bad.'

The Battery remained at Borden till February 17.

I am indebted to Lt. Allen J. Perry[2] for the following

[1] This was one of three Brigades raised by Sir Henry Norris, now M.P., viz. the 177th, 182nd, and 187th; all rendered wonderful service in France.

[2] Lt. Allen J. Perry joined the Royal Regiment of Artillery at the age of 14 years 3 months. Saw service for two years in the South African campaign with the 82nd and 67th Batteries, Private. From there to India for four and a half years. Left with the 109th Battery 3rd Division for France as Sergeant. August 1914, at Mons. Commissioned when Battery

account of this Battery between February 17 and April 11:—

'Major Steel having fallen sick, the Battery, now called B/182, under the temporary command of Lt. S. Collingwood, R.G.A., left for France via Southampton on February 17, 1916.

'After a month or so spent in the vicinity of Witterness to accustom the troops to billeting conditions, etc., we moved forward to the "back areas" of the Loos salient.

'From here we sent detachments at a time for a few days' attachment to both the 12th and 15th Divisional Artillery to get them used to the battle-zone and all its conditions, and to familiarise us all with that portion of the line which we eventually took over.

'On entering the line in relief of the 12th Divisional Artillery, B/182nd (Fulham) Bde. R.F.A. took over the duties of counter-battery work, for which purpose we were attached to the R.G.A. group, which was in command of Lt.-Col. Metcalfe, R.G.A., and it was while there that Major Steel rejoined and resumed command.'

'BASE, *April* 8, 1916.

'I arrived here yesterday morning after an unpleasant passage. Went out to the R.F.A. camp, several miles out of the town, where everything is much changed for the better since August 1914. I am leaving to-night to join my old lot from Borden.'

'*En route*, ABBEVILLE, *April* 1916.

'There have been great changes since I left. Batteries and Brigades all changed, and I am on my way to the Somme. Will let you know later what has happened to my Battery.'

Sergt.-Major in June, and sent home to Fulham, where he equipped and trained B/182, handing over to Major Steel on completion. Became Acting-Major, and commanded A/180 at Somme, 1916. Mentioned three times and M.C.

'*April* 11, 1916.

'I am off this morning to join the Battery (B) near Loos.'

Lt. Perry has given me the following interesting account of what happened after that date :—

'Our O.P. at that time was named "Bunny Hutch," and it certainly was not much larger than such.

'Our first experience of the Germans' aggressive stunts was an exceedingly unpleasant one.

'On this occasion I was forward observing officer. On April 27, 1916, just before dawn, I took up my post at the forward O.P. (Observing Post). I had scarcely arrived when I tasted in the air that which reminded me of the Germans' first gas attack at Ypres in 1915.

'I was unable to see anything, dawn not having broken, so I took the immediate precaution to buzz back on the 'phone "S.O.S. Gas!"

'This arrived at the Battery end all right, and in the shortest of time not only my own but every Battery in the Division had opened up.

'The execution was such that it broke up an undoubted enemy attack, the barrage being such that the Hun could not get through, and it was fortunately so, for his gas had played a ghastly game amongst our Infantry in the line, one battalion alone (The Inniskilling Fusiliers) suffering, I believe, 700 casualties.

'The following day was perfectly quiet, scarcely a shot being fired by either side. Undoubtedly the Hun was occupied in like manner as we ourselves, *i.e.* burying dead and reconstructing defences.

'I was liaison officer with the Infantry in the line on the night of the 28th. Just before dawn, on the morning of 29th, I was again on my way to the O.P., where I was to remain till Collingwood relieved me after breakfast. I had arrived to within about 100 yards of the O.P. when the Germans put down a terrific barrage.

'It was Divine Providence alone that enabled me to get

through the curtain of bursting shells without coming to any harm and to gain the shelter of the O.P. where, on looking out into the grey dawn, I saw a thick low-lying green cloud coming rolling towards our lines. A second gas attack was being launched. Once again I was able to get a message back to the Battery—" S.O.S. Gas ! " and only just in time, for a shell immediately afterwards cut my communication wires.

' Soon the whole of our Artillery were on the spot, and masters of the situation, for other observing officers had also " spotted " and reported.

' This time the gas did not reach our lines, for again the Divine Hand manifested itself, for as the cloud reached about half-way over " No Man's Land " it stood still for a second or so, and then commenced to roll back again, entrapping the enemy in his own net, the wind having changed completely round. When all was quiet again and daylight arrived the grass could be seen to have bleached in the track of the gas cloud, half-way across No Man's Land and then back again over the enemy's front, support, and rear trenches, and then some distance up the hill behind them.

' The promptitude and execution of our Artillery on this our first practical demonstration of covering our own Divisional Infantry gave to the latter an impression of confidence and comradeship which established itself and remained till the closing of hostilities.'

' B/182ND BRIGADE R.F.A., *April* 24, 1916.

' This is the second place I have been in, and I suppose as soon as we 've got this in some shape we shall move along again. This is the worst part of the line we 've been in, from every point of view. We get it on all three sides ; as soon as we make one room secure a shell comes and wrecks everything. We have taken it over in a hopeless state, and in about a month's time it may be something like a Battery. During daylight the Battery is shut off almost from communication, except telephone ! I am beginning to suffer from insomnia, I think. All huddled together like

this in cellars. Calls from the telephone through the night—and alarms. One never gets any fresh food here at all except ration meat, as it is too far to send into Bethune, and there is nothing but mines in all this area. It has rained nearly every day up till to-day, and blown hard, so it 's impossible to keep warm. There is no wood left even in the summer houses! I have been very fit so far, however. I get to sleep about 6 A.M., and soon after that the Germans always send over their morning bouquets of " crumps," which shake the whole place, and as soon as the plaster comes down on top of me I think it 's time to get up. I have not seen a newspaper for six days now.'

' B/182ND BRIGADE R.F.A., *May* 5, 1916.

' Since my last we have been through two gas attacks, and many casualties have resulted. The " weeping " shells, too, with which the Battery was plastered, were a great trial. However, the men did splendidly, and the shooting was excellent. We had a direct hit in one of our gunpits, but only the gun was knocked out. It has been perfect weather, and we have been able to get through a lot of work and make these mines a bit safer! I haven't had time to go down to my waggon line since arrival in the country. Horrible part of the line is this. The time seems to pass quickly. We haven't had an undisturbed night for a long time now—always gas alarms, attacks, attacks, etc., and it all results in nothing but tiring everybody out. Otherwise no news. I 'm afraid we shall be out of any attack in this salient, but are always being attacked on three sides. The newspapers are pretty interesting these days.'

' B/182ND BRIGADE R.F.A., *May* 11, 1916.

' Last night we had a terrific bombardment—all about nothing—and as usual our corner was plastered, and I can hardly open my eyes. It 's perfectly disgusting, these asphyxiating and weeping shells. We are moving again in a few days to an impossible position out in the open, into

some derelict gunpits. I expect it will take three weeks to a month to put them right.'

'The months of June and July,' wrote Lt. Perry, 'were spent very happily in the "Lone House Position," which we built ourselves, and at which Major Steel had worked so hard.

'In building a gun position he not only thought of the strength and concealment of the position, but gave marked attention to the construction, for the safety and comfort of his men; neither did he give instructions and leave the work for others to do, but laboured with his own hands, and that not spasmodically, but all and every day when he was not forced to be somewhere else.

'This position, known as the "Lone House" position, behind Fosse 7 at Loos was second to none.

'To this position came Staff Officers from all directions, and Major Steel was asked to submit to H.Q. a plan of the gunpit.

'Eventually one of the pits was put to a very severe test, it receiving two direct hits from a 5-inch (or thereabout) armour-piercing. The first left little impression other than a weakening of the pit, which was then unable to stand against the second.

'The first gave warning to the detachment, who cleared, so by the time the second arrived, which destroyed the gun, no men were there (the Battery was not in action at the time).

'In this same position Major Steel had a miniature theatre built, stage and all complete, and then hired a piano from Bethune and placed it in it. This was an integral part of the position, and one did not have to go out in the open whether to go to theatre, gunpit, men's "dug-outs," canteen, or any other necessity. All was underground, and shrapnel proof.

'The telephone systems of that position would also not take second place. It was as perfect as could be under existing circumstances, and every item of it was constructed and maintained by your son personally.

'His Battery just loved him, and all recognised him to be a fighter, one who was out to win, never showing the slightest sign of fear, yet took the greatest care to protect and conceal his Battery. We three subalterns were very happy with him. They with me could not be more happy under anybody than we were with Major Steel. Though kept hard at it, and at times under very trying circumstances, never can I remember one moment when he was not just all out to do his job, and that right cheerily.

'Though we all, officers and men, were kept "up to the scratch," we were a very happy Battery, and regretted exceedingly when re-organisation took place which meant the disbanding of what we esteemed the best Battery of the Division.'

'B/182ND BRIGADE R.F.A., *July* 4, 1916.

'It seems ages since I have written. We have been making a new position for the Battery, as well as our daily and nightly work. I have never a minute. The time seems to go very quickly, and I am very fit. I have noted re Graham Leadam. One hardly ever sees any one these days of dug-outs and communication trenches. I have had most of my kit ruined by a shell coming into my dug-out when I was not there. Everything has a mark of some kind on it, or perforated in many places. My air mattress punctured. We have an awfully good position now—quite clean. A nice cellar to feed in, but a rotten part of the line. However, a good Battery makes up for a lot.'

'B/182ND BRIGADE R.F.A., *July* 14, 1916.

'I think I must have my Banjo. Could you have it packed in wooden case, and despatched clearly addressed via Military Forwarding Officer, Southampton. Things are arriving pretty well by that route now, and I 've got a piano up from Bethune, which lives under about 6 feet of concrete and iron, and relieves everybody's nerves at times.'

'B/182ND BRIGADE R.F.A., *August* 1916.

'I am writing this in bed at Bethune Hospital. I had to come in at last after some weeks of not feeling up to the

mark, and eventually could not move about. Sort of rheumatic fever, but they don't seem to quite know. I shall not be going to base or home, and expect to be back in the Battery in a week's time. I took most of my music with me, but the rest you have found will all be welcome.'

At the end of August he had ten days' leave, and August 26 saw the end of B/182nd (Fulham) Brigade, for on the reorganisation of the Artillery from the 4-gun Batteries to 6 guns each the 182nd Brigade was disbanded and absorbed into the three remaining Brigades of the Division. Lt. Perry was posted as second in command of A/180, while Major Steel on his rejoining from England assumed command of B/177.

'*September* 12, 1916.

'I am now B/177. We are bang in the middle of it, so you may not hear for some days. No doubt you saw how our crowd took Guinchy. Every one living out in the open, just like Aug. and Sept. 1914, but shelling night and day.'

September 15 was the actual date of Major Steel being knocked out. In his recent book, *Realities of War*, Mr. Gibbs writes: 'On September 15 the German Command had another shock, when the whole line of the British troops on the Somme Front south of the Ancre rose out of their trenches and swept over the German defences in a tide.'

In a previous work by the same author, *The Battles of the Somme*, the various attacks were described in detail, and probably with insufficient knowledge for their description. However that may be, Major Steel, on being asked whether those descriptions gave any accurate impression of the occurrence of that day so far as his observation extended, expressed the opinion that they did not, so it may be that the recent description may on the whole be considered as the more accurate. An inquiry as to how Major Steel was wounded elicited the fact that he had gone on with the Infantry in order to keep in touch with them and prevent any such contretemps as already referred to resulting from the 'barrage,' and also to select, if possible, an observing

station in an advanced post where he could render them assistance if required. Readers of this Memoir will observe that this was in accordance with his action on previous occasions.

The first report, about September 16, 1916, of Major Steel having been wounded was a postcard received from Sister W. Tice, i/c : 'Major E. A. Steel has been wounded in the chest and shoulders and is extremely ill. The surgeons are doing all they can, but are very anxious about his condition in the next few days. He is not strong enough to be sent to the base yet, but is still at the 2/2nd London C.C.S.'

September 22, *from the same*: 'Major E. A. Steel has just left for the base. He is stronger than when brought in.'

He arrived at No. 8 General Hospital, Rouen, on September 20, and Mr. Newland, writing from there, said Major Steel hoped to be able to move in a few days, and that there was every hope that his arm would be saved.

Meanwhile a telegram received from the War Office said : 'Major Steel admitted to 8 General Hospital, Rouen, September 20, with gun-shot wound right arm slight.'

The only effect caused by the discrepancy in these accounts was wonder how these reports were compiled.

Meanwhile, Major Steel wrote a few lines with his left hand, and expressed a wish that if accommodation could be found for him he would like to be taken to Sister Agnes at 9 Grosvenor Gardens ; and so by the combined efforts of Sister Agnes, his mother, and the Medical Officer at the Front, he was conveyed to 9 Grosvenor Gardens. Arrived there, it soon became evident that so far from being slight his wounds were serious. True, his arm might be saved, but never to be a sound arm, and the wound in his chest turned out to be a penetration of the lung by a splinter which caused an abscess, and for long defied treatment, until under an operation a splinter was extracted.

However, more cases arrived and he was removed to Belgrave Square, the abode of Lord Aberconway, which had been given up as an annexe to the King Edward VII.

Hospital by its noble owner, and in March 1917 Major Steel was considered sufficiently recovered to be moved to No. 129 Convalescent Hospital, Brighton.

1917

In June 1917 Major Steel read a paper before the Royal Geographical Society on the subject of the Zambezi-Congo watershed. The President, Col. Holdich, in introducing the reader of the paper, said: 'Major Steel has had a long experience of survey in Africa, and is one of those travellers who take an interest not only in his official work but in many forms of inquiry into the history of the country and the habits and customs of the people. At the outbreak of the war the work of the Commission very abruptly terminated, and Major Steel, having been recalled to service, was after many months in France severely wounded at the Battle of the Somme. We are fortunate that his recovery has so far progressed that he is able now to give us this paper in the intervals of successive operations.'

Major Steel then gave a résumé not only of the details and difficulties encountered by the Commission[1] (to be found in a separate Chapter), but also an interesting account of the manners and customs of the people; he also initiated a discussion on the various projects for the transport of mineral wealth out of the country in the following words:—

'In some maps of Africa you will find a line marking, so the reference tells you, the proposed route of the Cape to Cairo Railway from Broken Hill to Tanganyika. This was one of the life objects of the late Cecil Rhodes, whose name is written in large letters throughout so much of the African continent. But those who first drew this line across the map had no idea of the sort of country to be traversed or the difficulties to be faced; and I think the original route from Broken Hill via Serenje, Mpika, Kasama must be relegated to the limbo of forgotten things. I think it will be a long time before the vast region of North-Eastern Rhodesia

[1] Especially those of transport.

will be of any commercial value, or will enter into the economic scheme its discoverers imagined. Owing to the discovery of the great Katanga copper belt the railway was extended from Broken Hill to Sakania on the Congo border, for which an easy route was available along the Kafue-Lusenfwa watershed. This line joins with the " Chemin de Fer du Katanga " system to Elizabethville. The line on to Kambove was completed in 1913, opening up some of the richest copper mines in the world, and in a few months Bukama on the Lualaba will be joined to Cape Town, a distance of 2600 miles, and will open up the rich tin deposits near Busanga.'

He then passed in review the various outlets to the ports on the east and west, as to the latter of which he had acquired many interesting details, and compared those of Cape Town, Lobito Bay, and Beira. It will be observed that he was so impressed with the mineral wealth of the Katanga district that he considered it as a factor that could not be disregarded in any complete scheme of economical transport.

'There is no doubt,' said he, 'that Africa's economical salvation can only be brought about by the development of transport facilities, thereby releasing the natives from the work of carrying loads,' and as railways must have something to live upon they should not be constructed through districts which had neither mineral wealth, population, nor agricultural produce, none of which was to be found in N.E. Rhodesia. These views, perfectly sound and generally acceptable to a body of city men looking for promising schemes for investment or prospecting, were much too detached for a purely British and South African audience, most of whom had gone through years of harassing war, while to a Rhodesian they must have appeared rank heresy; and even assembled—as they were—mainly for the purpose of congratulating Major Steel on his work, it soon became evident through a most interesting discussion which ensued that sentiment is a powerful factor in the

affairs of South Africa, and that no mere commercial objections will ever eclipse the desire for a Cape to Cairo Line, 'all British,' the dream of Cecil Rhodes whose name was 'written so large over South Africa.' Sir Richard Birchenough, while expressing on behalf of the Administration their appreciation of the work Major Steel had done for them and the extent to which they had been fascinated by the account he had given of his labours, pointed out that the territory in which Major Steel passed a solitary existence had since the war, and in consequence of it, become a hive of activity; that the enormous and undeveloped portion of N.E. Rhodesia, which some years before had been regarded as negligible from an economic point of view, had in order to forward supplies to General Northey's Column in East Africa become a practical thoroughfare, partly by water through the swamps of Lake Bangweulu and partly by motor road, in the direction necessary to carry out the original scheme of railway; and though it might take years to accomplish, his audience might rest assured that Rhodesia, the pioneer of railway work in South Africa, would do everything in its power to complete the great ideal of its founder, Mr. Rhodes.

Mr. Wilson Fox, M.P., touched the same note. He said that although the construction of the railway might have to depend in the future on commercial and financial considerations, nevertheless he was still hopeful that in the days to come we should see it approximate to the route originally traced by Mr. Rhodes—he had seen him do it—in the Chartered Company's Board Room: and even the President, obviously in sympathy with Major Steel and his work, could scarcely resist the appeal to an 'All British Line.'

The discussion was of absorbing interest not only to those who heard it but to those who have had an opportunity of reading it. It has since been followed by others of a more technical description, but it may be conjectured that this contribution will be long remembered and recalled with regret now that the voice of the originator is silent.

Since the foregoing was written an article has appeared in the Empire Number of *The Times* of May 25, 1920, from the pen of Lt.-Col. Solomon, which, if it fairly represents the present condition of N.E. Rhodesia, rather encourages the supposition that the judgment of Major Steel may be more sound than the optimism of the Rhodesians.

North-Eastern Rhodesia

Once upon a time it was considered that the Tanganyika Plateau, which forms the connecting link between Lakes Nyassa and Tanganyika, would become a valuable highway of communication in Central Africa, and would be rapidly opened up and developed. The Stevenson Road was constructed to connect the two lakes. The African Lakes Corporation built stores at various points on the road, and the settlements of Abercorn and Fife were planned in such a way as to permit of their being developed into flourishing townships.

These optimistic prognostications have not been fulfilled. To-day the Stevenson Road has fallen into disuse, and in places can hardly be traced. Most of the African Lakes Corporation stores have been abandoned, and are now ruins. The post-office of Abercorn remains a testimony to these unrealised anticipations. It is almost big enough to cope with a town the size of Tunbridge Wells ; unhappily, to-day, the population of Abercorn consists of six Europeans. Another testimony is the Victorian Memorial Library at Abercorn, which contains so many books that were the whole of the inhabitants of the place to read consistently for the rest of their lives, they would not have digested a tithe of the works collected there.

Whether the plateau will ever be developed depends on the communications afforded to it making development worth while. Should a railway run from Wiedhafen to the coast the plateau may yet be peopled by white settlers, and have a good future before it. It stands some 4000 to 5000 feet above sea-level, is free from the mosquito, and has a pleasant climate. Its soil is good, and almost untouched, except by the native cultivator. There is one 'white' cattle farm on it, and the goings and comings of stock to the nearest market area, Elizabethville, occupy months of walking, and the necessity of passing through many belts where the tsetse fly flourishes. Cattle can only be

moved by night, and valuable stock is protected during the day by being stabled under mosquito netting. In some villages the white man has hardly ever been seen ; or if seen, only at such rare intervals as to make his coming an event of importance for many a day. In the southern portion of this area, in the neighbourhood of Fort Jameson, the country has been settled in to a certain extent, and cotton, rubber, and tobacco have been grown with success. The communications of Nyassaland, however, are more likely to prove of value to this portion of the territory than are those of Northern Rhodesia.

The treatment dragged on, his arm had to be reset, and he had to undergo an operation to try and recover the use of a nerve which prevented the use of the fingers. This was carried out at Prince of Wales' Hospital, formerly the Central Railway Hotel, and at length, in April 1918, he was reported fit for light duty.

CHAPTER XII

Anti-Aircraft — Passed for General Service — Embarked for Mesopotamia—Appointed Command Brigade Artillery—Volunteers for Service with British Military Mission, Siberia—Journey—Singapore—Shanghai, Visit and Festivities—Vladivostok, Novo-Nikolaevsk, Barnaul, Bisk, Omsk, Yekaterinburg—General Jack—Illness and Death at Omsk—Letters from General Knox and Russian Officers—Summary—Conclusion.

1918

On being reported fit for light duty at the end of April 1918 Major Steel was posted to the School of Instruction in Anti-Aircraft Gunnery, at that time established at Newport, Isle of Wight, after much discussion and prolonged vacillation as to whether it was to be carried out by the Admiralty or the War Office.

The defence of London, it will be remembered, had been a topic of gossip in the first twelve months of the war ; a sharp line seemed to divide those who thought a raid probable and those who thought otherwise. The question was surrounded by mystery, and the wildest conjectures were afloat as to what, if any, measures had been taken against possible land or Zeppelin attack. Londoners had watched with curiosity the erections at Hyde Park Corner. It was rumoured that learned professors had been asked to provide a formula for high-angle fire at an object of unknown altitude. A distinguished civilian, it was said, had been asked to take charge of the land defences, whether he had studied the principle of land defences or otherwise ; and it was said that he had consented on the condition that he was to be in sole charge, unfettered by advice or assistance of any kind. As to the defence against aircraft, which it transpired, to the astonishment of everybody, had up to that time been under the charge of the Admiralty, we have

since been told that Sir Percy Scott was asked in 1915 to take charge of it, and that he had consented, also on the condition that he should be supreme.

These rumours may or may not have had a solid basis. If so, they—and several others of a similar nature that recent controversies have elicited—tend to show the great difficulty that every administration has to reckon with in finding capable individuals who can act in harmony with others in a national cause. In business this problem seems to have been solved; but in affairs of state it would seem to be otherwise. Perhaps some kink in human nature supplies the clue, and is the reason why politicians always quarrel; why Cabinets which are at the time supposed to be united, when the memoirs of their respective members come to be written are shown to have been in a chronic state of discord; why the War Office is always 'in a muddle'; why the Admiralty, hitherto popularly supposed to have been admirably and efficiently managed, has lately, through the indiscretions of distinguished admirals, proved to have been a hotbed of intrigue and jealousy; and why even 'marriage is a failure.'

But this is a digression, however true. The land defence of London is still surrounded by mystery, though at the time rumour had it that hard-worked professional men were devoting the last hour of their spare time in digging trenches when they might have been more usefully employed; and if any one knows where they are situated, and on what principle they have been devised, the secret has been carefully preserved.

As to the air, the story has been told correctly and humorously by Admiral Sir Percy Scott with chapter and verse;[1] and it need only be said here that at the time we are now writing of—April 1918—it had developed into a system, and Schools of Instruction had been established. The defence of the capital had been taken over by the War Office in February 1916.

[1] *Fifty Years in the Navy.* See also *The Dover Patrol* by Admiral Bacon; and *Memories* and *Letters* by Lord Fisher.

Zeppelins came over London and dropped bombs in September 1915, and then for the first time the idea of forming an anti-aircraft corps was started. In the months which elapsed before the War Office took charge much had been done: high-angle firing guns produced; high-explosive bullets invented; Air Force in sufficient strength (?) provided; and, generally speaking, land defence became an organised system.

Major Steel was sent to the Reserve Brigade of Anti-Aircraft Gunnery at Newport, Isle of Wight, and after a course there and at Shoeburyness was posted to the Chatham district of Anti-Aircraft Defence, his work consisting in inspecting the Anti-Aircraft batteries between Gravesend and Sheerness, and in August he was brought to Headquarters at Great George Street, the Headquarters of the A.A.C. Batteries, Defence of London. A small group of officers spent their time by day inspecting the A.A.C. Batteries, and at night by turn sat at a table awaiting the warning of the telephone, and took measures accordingly.

On September 5, 1918, having been passed by Medical Board 'Fit G.S.,' he was ordered to Mesopotamia, and started on September 24, about two years after he had narrowly escaped with his life in the advance on the Somme on September 15, 1916.

From Southampton to Cherbourg, and thence by train, occupying nine days, to Taranto, and thence by transport to Egypt.

'*En train, Oct.* 4.—You will be able to judge what sort of a journey it has been when I say we have averaged seven miles an hour. Officers herded in baggage waggons, and everything rottenly managed.'

The following account of the journey has been given by Julian S. Tritton[1]:—

[1] Julian S. Tritton, eldest son of Sir Seymour Tritton, K.B.E., and Lady Tritton, served as an Assistant Engineer on the B.B. & C.I. Railway; took a Viceroy's commission in 1915, and became a Company Commander of the Railway Unit of the Indian Defence Force early in 1915, was transferred to the Royal Engineers on special duty at the War Office M.R., and in September 1915 was posted to the I.E.F. Mesopotamia. On arrival at Port Said he was transferred to the North-Western Railway.

'I was delighted on arrival at Waterloo to meet Major Steel on the platform, and find that he too was Eastward bound. It was the first time I had seen him for five or six years.

'From the start I very much appreciated his kindness in taking a "2nd Lieut." under his wing, as he did me. His seniority and experience proved invaluable in helping our little party through most of the discomforts unavoidable in travelling with a party of about say 250 young officers.

'At Cherbourg the Major very kindly arranged with the R.T. Staff for me to travel in his compartment in the O.C.'s coach with Major Herschel and himself—no small advantage on a nine-day journey.

'The nine days passed cheerfully in spite of the everlasting waits and halts, scheduled and otherwise, which never seemed to depress the Major as they did the majority of us.

'It was at Taranto that I first realised how bad his arm was. To attract his attention in a crowd on the platform one evening I gripped his elbow sharply. It must have hurt him considerably, but he only remarked, "Steady, that 's my dickey arm!" I imagine this arm gave him a good deal of pain off and on during the whole voyage, but he hardly ever mentioned it.

'We were all bound for Mesopotamia, but shortly before reaching Port Said we got the news by wireless that the Turks were on the verge of collapse. "Good news, that, Major," I said. "What!" said he. "Worst news we 've had this trip. It will be all over by the time we get there."'

While the transport was on its way to Suez Major Steel paid a visit to Cairo.

'Suez, *October* 24.

'Still messing about *en route*. Nothing but delay and muddle here, and this after four years, so I can't imagine what it must have been at the beginning. Some officers have lost all their kit. Most have lost some of it. I am one of the lucky ones. This waiting day after day with absolutely nothing to do makes one feel incapable of ever

doing any hard work again. Tritton says he has never done a real day's work since he came into the Army, and if he doesn't get back to his railways soon his brain will rust. He has gone ahead of me, as apparently it is more important to get to India than to Mespot! I get a good dose from the skipper on board every night of how they are run in these parts; at any rate there is no shortage of anything anywhere.'

'*November* 12, 1918.

'I went ashore at Aden and had a look at the water tanks again that I had last seen when coming home with you from India about 1887. Bombay was much altered—many good hotels, and motor cars all over the place owned by opulent Parsees. We reach Basra to-morrow. I expect to be there a few days, and then a trip up the river. I gather there will be plenty to do up country, settling the country from the Black Sea to Southern Russia.'

After a short stay at Basra, where he described the conditions from which he was unable to get away, and incidentally observed, 'I wish I had brought my Banjo,' he proceeded to Baghdad by river.

'*November* 27, 1918.

'I have just met Thuillier,[1] Capt. R.G.A.; he was in the next tent to me in the rest camp, but I did not know it. Leslie [2] is up the Tigris. Hacking is down at the base, and Christy, who talked at my lecture at the Geographical, is in the Malarial Department here. I have had quite a pleasant few days in Baghdad, and have been very comfortable at the Heavy Art. H.Q., who have put me up. The skipper of the mail-boat that brought us to Bombay, "Dow," knew John when he was in the *Centurion* years ago in China. He was attached for R.N.R. training from some merchant vessel. I have just met Col. Percy Smith at

[1] Son of Maj.-Gen. H. F. Thuillier, C.B., C.M.G., R.E., Commandant S.M.E., Chatham, etc.

[2] Leslie Thuillier, Indian Army, his cousin, son of Col. Sir H. R. Thuillier, K.C.I.E., late Royal Engineers.

Baghdad Club; his father was at Gulmurg when I was there in 1901. I am appointed (temp.) Lt.-Col. to command 55th Brigade R.F.A., 13th Division.'

It will be remembered that the first orders for demobilisation were that all tradesmen—or, as they were called, pivotal men—who had been taken from the workshops were to be returned first. This plan did not stand the test of practice. Volunteers of earlier date saw no justice or reason for conscripted men of later date being allowed to go earlier, and a crisis ensued which caused a complete change in the order for demobilisation.

This is a digression, but a necessary one, because it is one of the causes why Major Steel went to Russia. His Brigade was to march down to Amara, being depleted, according to orders then existing, of all his best men, and he said by the time he arrived at Basra he would have only the skeleton of a Brigade left. He might, no doubt, have brought his Brigade home, retained his temporary rank of Lt.-Col., and sat down quietly until the demobilisation was complete, but this he could not do. When the call for volunteers for Russia came, though he had to give up his temporary rank, he volunteered. It would scarcely be fair to ascribe his decision to volunteer for service in Russia entirely to the foregoing cause; owing to his long disability, in consequence of his wounds, he had been passed over by his contemporaries who had received promotion and decorations, and undoubtedly he felt this, and was anxious to find an opportunity to recover his position and gain distinction by further service. Moreover, his chivalry was awakened by that call of Russia for help.

'Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force,
'55th Bde. R.F.A., 13/D., *December* 30, 1918.

'. . . The weather here is rough, very cold, and ice in the mornings. Sometimes rain, sometimes wind and sand, while the sun is never hot enough to need a topi, which is rather nice. We are in tents, so it 's pretty stiff. The Diyala runs swiftly by—100 yards across—and the snow

is visible on the mountain tops. I have a pretty large command—four Batteries and an Ammunition Column—so I am kept pretty busy. Most uninteresting country, and a dirty lot of diseased Arabs here and there in a few scattered villages. Quite open country except for bunches of date palms here and there, and the whole land is cut up with canals a few feet wide and bunded both sides—some dry, some with water, just a big enough obstacle to prevent one getting over it.

'I get through a good bit of riding, and have had one or two shoots on Sunday morning. There is nothing in this country except bird life, and that is very scarce, but very good eating. Excellent partridges, but very hard to get. My arm is holding out well! and hurts just about the same as ever. At present I am very interested in carpets and read up a good deal about them. Officers have paid such prices and bought such trash that the story goes that London firms are sending their Oriental rugs out to Baghdad to sell before the Army of Occupation goes away! However, for those who know and can tell the difference between vegetable and aniline dyes and old and modern work, there are still excellent bargains, and I hope to pick up several on my return to Baghdad, which will be very soon. We are due to go to Amara January 20, whole 13th Division. This is the only British Division out here. The feeding question is very difficult here, so we are going down. Our men are going home according to their trades, starting now.

'I have heard from Pope-Hennessy,[1] and he has invited me to stay with him up the Tigris near Tekri, so I'm going to have a shot at it. I should like to have a look at dirty old "Mosul," which I hear was the filthiest town in existence.'

[1] L. H. R. Pope-Hennessy, b. 1875, eldest son of the late Sir J. Pope-Hennessy, K.C.M.G., M.P., of Rostellan Castle, Co. Cork. Joined Oxford L.I., 1895; D.S.O., 1908; p.s.c.; C.O. King's African Rifles, 1906. In European War, 1914; Bt.-Lt.-Col. and Col., Chevalier of Legion of Honour; G.S.O.2 in France, 1915-16; Commander 1st Oxford and Bucks L.I. in Mesopotamia, 1916-17; G.S.O. 3rd Div., 1917; B.G.G.S. Indian Army Corps, 1917-18.

At the end of a delightful book,[1] Mr. Hale, writing on December 29, from Kermanshah :—

'The men have a Soldiers' Club where dances and lectures while away the long evenings. . . . Arrangements were made for a varied programme of sports on Christmas and Boxing Days, but snow and rain prevented most of the meetings. . . . Mesopotamia is going home, one division has already started on its way to Basra. The troops up the line now move, when they move at all, towards Baghdad only.'

1919

'Abusaida, *January* 2, 1919.

'I have not heard from you since the end of October. There seems to be awful delay. I sent you a telegram of New Year's greetings as my letter will probably have been late. I am going off on a tour of inspection, one of my batteries separated from the rest. I hope to get as far as Hamadan, or at least to Kermanshah, if the snow on the Pass permits of it. One Battery that has just come down had to camp in two feet of snow. I shall return via Mosul and I might catch General Pope-Hennessy on my way near Tekri.'

'*Jan.* 5. (Extract from Diary.)—Left in Smith's car for trip into Persia via Shahroban, Kizil Robat, Qasr-i-Shirin, etc.'

The gap in Col. Steel's correspondence between Nov. 27 and Dec. 30 leaves no doubt that his letter or letters have been lost.

His subsequent proceedings are thus explained in a letter dated January 31, s.s. *Sandakan* :—

'The last to you reported me starting off on a tour of inspection in Persia, which I had hoped to complete via Mosul and stay with Pope-Hennessy, but I received a wire after some days out that I was appointed to join a batch of officers proceeding to Vladivostok to train Czechs and

[1] *From Persian Uplands*, by F. Hale. Constable and Co. 1920.

Slovaks against the Bolsheviki, so, though I had some difficulty in passing my medical exam., I think it will suit me. I find now the heat affects me more than the cold. It was very severe on the Persian frontier, but I got quite used to it. How it will be when it is below zero remains to be seen. However, there is not much more to do in Mesopotamia—rapid demobilisation taking place—and my command would hardly have been a soldier's one. So I accepted this. I am not sure how I am going, whether by Colombo or Calcutta. I have got a paper authorising me to go to Vladivostok, and in due course we shall arrive. This explains how I have missed several mails.

'I was not able to see Sir John Hewett[1] before leaving. He was lecturing to British officers in Baghdad on every conceivable subject except that relating to his official visit.'

This letter arrived in England February 22, and on the same day a telegram: 'Proceeding to Vladivostok.'

This requires explanation. When Major Steel was Chief of the Rhodesia-Congo Boundary Commission he had met Sir John Hewett, who was travelling in South Africa (see p. 66), and as Sir John was starting for Mesopotamia at the same time Major Steel had endeavoured to arrange that they should meet again. This was prevented by the different circumstances of their respective voyages, but when Sir John Hewett reached Baghdad it seemed reasonable to hope that they might meet there, and but for Major Steel's necessarily hasty departure they certainly would have met. Major Steel's remark about the lecturing recalls an amusing episode about which the public would not have heard anything except for a debate in the House of Lords reported in *The Times*, November 28, 1919.

Case of Sir John Hewett

Lord Lamington called attention to the action of the Army Council in calling upon Sir John Hewett for an explanation of

[1] Sir John Prescott Hewett, G.C.S.I., K.B.E., formerly Lt.-Governor of the United Provinces.

his conduct in having delivered in January last at Baghdad a private lecture to an audience of military officers, on the ground that the lecture criticised the Indian reform proposals, and asked whether Sir John Hewett did not in his explanation show conclusively that the action of the Secretary of State for India in asking the Army Council to take him to task was without justification, and what action the Army Council or the Secretary of State had taken on receipt of the explanation.

Viscount Peel, Under-Secretary to the War Office, stated that the War Office received information from the India Office that the lecture in question was of an undesirable kind, and had certain results, one being that a number of officials in India had been applying for posts outside India. Sir John Hewett had gone out to Mesopotamia at the request of the War Office. The War Office, having considered the matter, and in deference to this communication, agreed to ask this gentleman for an explanation of what he said. Sir John Hewett accordingly wrote a full letter of explanation to the War Office. This was sent in to the India Office, and the reply received from the India Office was that the Secretary of State did not press for any further action. That reply was sent to Sir John Hewett, and there, so far as the War Office was concerned, the whole matter was closed.

Lord Sinha, Under-Secretary of State for India, explaining the action of that Department in the case, stated that complaint was made by the Civil Commissioner at Baghdad to the Secretary of State for India, under whom he acted, with regard to the lecture and the immediate result of it—namely, that there was an increased number of applications for employment in Mesopotamia by permanent officials holding pensionable positions in India. On that the Secretary of State for India asked the War Office to call upon Sir John Hewett for an explanation. Sir John Hewett was then acting as agent to the War Office in Mesopotamia, and the Secretary of State for India had no right to call for an explanation from him. On receiving Sir John Hewett's explanation through the War Office the Secretary of State said that he did not wish to press the matter further.

The Earl of Selborne did not think the story reflected great credit upon the common sense and courtesy of the War Office or the India Office. Sir John Hewett was one of the most distinguished of our public servants. Such a letter as the War Office sent him should not have been written.

Earl Curzon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said his personal feeling of admiration and regard for Sir John Hewett did not leave him an impartial judge, but he thought that the Earl of Selborne had dealt out rather hard treatment to both Departments, especially to the War Office. He had no doubt that the inquiry addressed by the Secretary of State for India to the War Office was a perfectly legitimate and *bona-fide* one. He was not an admirer of official phraseology ; he spent a good deal of his time correcting it. (Laughter.) The letter written by the War Office to Sir John Hewett was not a model of the kind of English spoken at the dinner-table or in the drawing-room, but it did not cover any desire to be discourteous or offensive. Sir John Hewett made a very effective reply, and the Secretary of State for India retired with dignity. It was a scene of combat from which every one retired with credit.

The Marquess of Salisbury hoped that even yet the War Office would express regret.

The motion was withdrawn.

Whether the hope entertained by Lord Salisbury was fulfilled or not, the Army Council published the excellent report of Sir J. Hewett at a price that enables any one desiring to know the present value of Mesopotamia to make himself acquainted with the facts.[1]

The Revolution in Russia of 1917, and the subsequent proceedings resulting therefrom, caused such confusion, and even now are so obscure, that it is very difficult to understand the circumstances in which these volunteers, of whom Major Steel was one, were invited to go to Siberia in November 1918.

In the Far East a very difficult problem was created for the Entente Governments. An enormous quantity of stores, mostly purchased from Japan, had been collected at various points along the Siberian railway between Vladivostok and Irkutsk. The port itself was blocked with stores that could not be moved, and when revolution broke out they required protection, and it seemed most natural that Japan should be asked to undertake the task. An enormous number of

[1] *Report for the Army Council on Mesopotamia*, by Sir John P. Hewett, G.C.S.I., K.B.E. His Majesty's Stationery Office. Price 1s. 6d.

German prisoners had been collected in East Siberia, and the wildest rumours were afloat as to their numbers and possible behaviour. The necessity for intervention was apparent, and the murder of Mr. Ishido, Japanese merchant in Vladivostok, necessitated the landing of a force by the Japanese in April 1918, and much discussion in the Press, and presumably in diplomatic circles, on joint intervention ensued, as to which little is known, but the facts are that some Marines from British ships were landed for the protection of the Consulate at the same time. Japan was prepared to intervene, but with a firm hand, and perhaps proposed a joint occupation with U.S., but this latter held the view that the Entente would be placed in a false position by suggesting Japanese intervention while denouncing German occupation of Russia in the west. Moreover, that effective occupation would require a much larger force than they either desired or were able to provide. It seems to have been generally agreed that Japan alone could effectively intervene, but by way of giving it the semblance of internationalisation it was arranged that small forces of about 5000 men of each nation should be landed—in which move China also desired to join—and Japan occupied Blagovyeshchensk, then the capital of the Amur Province.

From such accounts as have been made public this joint occupation was not regarded with favour by Japan, but rather as unnecessary, as implying distrust or want of confidence in her actions. Perhaps it would have been better for us if we had advocated a more generous occupation by Japan. However this may be, the question took another turn by the fact that some 15,000 Czecho-Slovaks, under General Gaida, who refused to accept the terms forced on the Bolsheviki by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, worked their way across Siberia intending to join the French in the west. On arrival at Vladivostok, in June 1918, finding it in the hands of Bolsheviki, they marched in and took possession, and then joined in with the British and French and other forces scattered along the railway. Con-

fusion was increased by General Horvat in July declaring the independence of Siberia and proclaiming himself dictator. This aroused protests from the occupying Powers, but no one inclined to intervene, and Japan, who would no doubt have intervened, was not invited to do so.

Another question arose when in July the Bolshevik Government denounced British intervention in Archangel and Vladivostok as unjustifiable and asked for an explanation. This was followed by the murder of Capt. Cromie, attached to the British Embassy and the British Consulate at Moscow, in August, and by every description of propaganda against the British and French intervention in both east and west.

In the west the reason for British intervention seemed to be demanded by the fact that the treaties with Germany by the Bolshevik Government opened the route via the Black Sea ports to Mesopotamia, Persia, Afghanistan, and India, and we already had a small force with a Mission of about two weak battalions and a number of officers, principally technical, to assist in keeping open the Black Sea route, the Caspian and the Siberian railway, and generally to advise and assist Admiral Koltchak, who had now, with the support of the Allies, become supreme ruler of the Anti-Bolshevik movement with the sole object of protecting Allied interests and assisting in establishing an administration that would maintain order.

Things were in this condition when Major Steel went to Mesopotamia in September 1918. The Armistice which was declared in November removed the German menace, and the British Government decided to withdraw the small military forces then in Siberia and limit their assistance to providing additional officers for technical instruction and stores they might require that they could not otherwise obtain. Major Steel was one of several officers who went from Mesopotamia.

The Party [1] left Basra for Bombay on January 23, by

[1] Major (Acting Lt.-Col.) Steel, Capt. Hodges, Capt. Faber, Lt. Stratton, Lt. Simmons, Lt. Allen. I am not sure of the rank of the three last, and I have no means of verifying or communicating with them.

s.s. *Sandakan*, hired transport, arriving in Bombay on February 1. Then came a streak of bad luck which is thus described :—

'NEGAPATAM, *March* 3, 1919.

'After writing my last from Bombay, I embarked on the *Dilwara*, which was going round to Hong-Kong, but unfortunately we got delayed by a case of plague developing on board and had to wait outside in quarantine. Then the skipper's dog, which we had been playing with, developed symptoms of rabies, and three of us had to go up to Kasauli for an anti-rabies treatment, so we bundled off the boat, and I found myself going through India again. After a long journey and a three hours' ride up from Kalka on a pony, I arrived in two feet of snow and everything looked beautiful. I went straight to the Institute, got my first injection, and settled down at the Club. Unfortunately the treatment twice a day makes one feel very rotten, and not always up to coming down and up to the Institute twice daily. I felt all the time as if some one was sitting on my chest, and no doubt it did my lung good as I had to breathe like anything. After sixteen days of it I proceeded to Calcutta, found Adolf, who is quite one of the local magnates, and there is no doubt he and John have worked up a splendid business, second to none there. I lunched and dined with Adolf [1] in his beautiful home, and

[1] Adolf Howeson, son of a life-long and dearly valued friend of the writer, was educated at Uppingham and Oxford, and was in the University Cricket Eleven. With his brother John he has for many years been actively and successfully engaged in commerce and industry in Calcutta, taking a prominent part in the industrial expansion which has been a noteworthy feature of the Indian business world during the past decade.

Oscar, his father, came to England as a boy of nineteen in the year 1848, and elected to become a citizen of this country. After a short apprenticeship he went out to Calcutta, and started in business there. During the Mutiny he served with the Calcutta Volunteers, and became a sergeant. After a successful business career, during which he amassed wealth, he retired from business, married, and devoted himself to the upbringing of his family, hoping to enjoy the winter of his days as an English

Scene on the Ob.

Group of Officers at Barnaul, 1919.

Major Pattison. Lieut.-Col. Steel. Capt. Conlan.

Facing p. 144.

Training Russian Artillery at Barnaul.

Lieut.-Col. E. A. Steel and Mr. Wilton during Retreat from Yekaterinburg, near Tyumen, July 1919.

saw Camac St. where you and his father lived together once. The next day I went over a jute factory, and in the evening left for Puri-on-Sea to get some surf bathing. It was great fun, and in spite of my lung and arm I was quite the champion of the Coromandel Coast in a Catamaran canoe. Unfortunately it 's rather dangerous. I then went to Madras, had a couple of days to complete my outfit and embarked on this ship. We have just put in at Negapatam, S. India, and I will be able to get this posted before we go across to Penang and Singapore. There I will probably find the old *Dilwara*. There are only fifteen passengers on this tub—mostly missionaries going back to Australia! I don't seem to have been anywhere more than a fortnight since I left England. Nothing but packing up and unpacking. Just before I left Madras I got three letters from you and some newspapers. I reckon to have missed about three of your mails—December 23 and 27 and January 6. Heartiest congratulations to John on his C.B.E. Some mails seem to have gone astray altogether. I hear that d'Arcy has written to me several times, but I have never received a word from him since I left England. I have just received a letter from Mrs. Mallock, dated November 18, which she sent you to forward on. I shall not give any destination in Siberia, as if I leave for anywhere else there is always a mess up, so I 'll give c/o Messrs. T. Cook & Son, Shanghai, China. It would have been much better if I had had all correspondence addressed to Cook at Bombay, then I would have been able to pick it all up on my way back. Have

country gentleman. By his friends—and they were many (including the writer)—he was regarded as a king among men. A born mathematician, the possessor of knowledge gathered from a wide intercourse with men of all nations, a musician of such a calibre that he might have made it a profession, it seemed that he might well have looked forward to an honourable and honoured retirement. He had, however, one fault. Himself the soul of honour, he trusted to the honesty of his fellow-men, and this when put to the test failed him. A member of the firm to which he had bequeathed his name became an unsuccessful gambler in 'silver,' and in order to save him from ruin Oscar sacrificed a large portion of his well-earned capital, and, returning to business in London in the last years of his life, he remained active until the day of his death.

you seen the new pay conditions of Indian Police? Very good indeed, as the life is so cheap for a policeman and excellent opportunities if a fellow has any guts. Personally, I would rather do that than Indian Army now; I hope to get into conversation with the rubber world at Singapore and perhaps visit an estate if I am delayed. Wonderful show, the British Army; it is all over the world now, keeping the peace, but there 's never any hurry and all done regardless of expense. I may be two months before I see the snow again. It is real hot here, lying off the shore on a third-class boat. I seem to go from snow to tropics alternately, and keep very fit on it all. My next will be from Penang or Singapore.'

1919

Jan. 23. Left Basra in s.s. *Sandakan.*
„ 26. Left Jenjam Island.
Feb. 1. Arrived Bombay.
„ 2. Sunday.
„ 3. Left Bombay for Kasauli B.B. and C.I., Rawal Pindi, met Jack Lock and Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Stranach.
„ 5. Arrived Kasauli. Put up at Club.
„ 6. Col. Hodgson, I.A.
„ 7. Major and Mrs. Carmichael, R.A.M.C.
„ 7. —— Desmond.
„ 8. Col. and Mrs. Talbot.
„ 20. Arrived Calcutta. Stayed Grand Hotel. Lunched and dined with Adolf.
„ 21. Left Calcutta for Puri. Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Viney in same train. 6 Hastings Street, H. S. King and Co.
„ 26. Arrived Madras.
March 1. Left Madras for Pondicheri, Negapatam.
14. Arrived at Singapore and went to Sea View Hotel.

On Sunday he spent the day with General Sir Dudley

Ridout, who on hearing of his death wrote me the following:—

'His death was a great shock to me, for during his short stay in Singapore I saw a good deal of him, and both Lady Ridout and I were fascinated by his keen vigorous outlook. He struck me as a man who was splendidly equipped with mental powers and the possessor of unbounded energy, and now he is gone, a sad loss to the Army and those who value its highest traditions.'

March 24. Arrived Hong-Kong. Played tennis with Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Mitchell, and left in *Glengyle* on the 27th.

„ 31. Arrived Shanghai.

April 11. R.M.S. *Monteagle*. 'We have had a splendid ten days at Shanghai, dancing every afternoon and evening. Everybody did their best to give us a good time, and we were all very sorry to leave.'

„ 13. Arrived Moji, Japan.

„ 16. „ Vladivostok.

„ 28. Arrived N.N.

'Novo Nikolaevsk, *May* 3, 1919.

'Dearest Mother and Father,—I have at last moved here after a very quick journey in the mail train—twelve days—the time it used to take in pre-war days to go from Shanghai to Berlin! Most trains take three to four weeks, but we were lucky not to be held up, though there were many signs of Bolshevik work *en route*—most bridges being propped up on piles of sleepers. They have done a lot of damage along the line. Whilst mooning about the docks at Vladivostok before the train started I stumbled across my banjo box. It had just come off the *Carmarthen*, and was being thrown into the Ordnance Department Store along with the shells and howitzers and bicycles and telephone wire, and you can imagine how pleased I was to

have it. It is in perfect condition. There is chaos at Vlad. The Canadian Expeditionary Force preparing to leave, and the handing over of everything to our people is a big task, while our own ships are unloading every kind of war material for the Russians on to the quay, and it 's a wonderful sight. There seems to be no mail service for us. When any officer is going up he is thrown various bags of mails for all up-country officers, and if they are not there to meet the train, they don't get them—perhaps on the return journey ! It is almost impossible to find out when any train is likely to arrive, so I don't know when I shall hear from you. But as the banjo has arrived I know that you have heard from me and are attending to all my wants. I feel very lost out here. The Russians seem incapable of doing anything. Everything is, "Never mind, it doesn't matter." We call it the "Land of To-morrow." They never do anything to-day as to-morrow they may not have to. It is impossible to describe the situation here. I am off to Barnaul, which is 150 miles due south of Novo Nikolaevsk, which is situated where the Trans-Siberian Railway crosses the Ob River. There is a railway (private) to Barnaul and Semipalatinsk, but I shall probably go by the steamer, which is getting ready to go now, the first trip of the season. It goes on up to Bisk at the foot of the Altai Mountains, and I shall treat myself to a little shooting and exploring. Barnaul is to be the Artillery Training Centre of the 13th and 14th Russian Divisions which I am going to start off. At present they only exist on paper, I believe ! So they will want a lot of gingering up. They think they are going to train them in two months with our guns which are now arriving only—so I am sorry for the Infantry. The last blocks of ice are floating down the rivers now and it is not too cold. There is no spring here, and summer comes on without any warning—pretty hot too. Up to Vladivostok I had not lost a single thing of my kit, and I had everything from a packet of toothpicks to an iron for ironing my clothes. But on the journey up somebody took a fancy to my Field Service Cap, so I 'm having one

made here. It will be a sight I expect. Everything is a terrific price here, there being no trains for merchandise; but bread, milk, and butter are all procurable locally, and that 's all. Sugar, tea, coffee, etc., do not exist. We have all brought food cases with us, but life is plain for all here. And it 's tea all day long. I have some whiskey, but can only get boiling water to drink with it, so limit myself to one drink before going to bed. Eggs are very scarce, and I have just paid two roubles each for some—which is sixpence each at a minimum valuation. A rouble is now about threepence instead of two shillings. I am staying in the Russian Barracks, some two miles out of town, with two other of our officers—one infantry and one machine-gun. Filthy dirty place, facing an immense Austrian Prisoners' Camp. There are no roads or paths anywhere, and everybody and everything is loathsome, and yet they all seem happy and gay, officers included. There is plenty of vodka, of course, but I haven't tasted any yet. I don't quite know what I shall do. All plans are changed every few days it seems, and both the French Mission and ours seem to have great difficulty in getting the Russians to do anything. I may be attached to the Czecho-Slovaks in about a week who are guarding the whole line of communications from Chelyabinsk to Vladivostok, or I may go to Yekaterinburg in the Urals where a new composite Brigade is being formed—destination Moscow! The only bit of real excitement is that on May 1, being Revolution Day, proclamations were stuck up in this town by the Bolsheviki threatening Admiral Koltchak, head of the Government at Omsk, and telling the Anglo-French Mission they would be first too, as they see in us the sole obstacle to their aims. If we left, there would certainly be an end of all government. There is very little now even. I am looking forward to a trip to the Altai Mountains, where I believe it is beautiful, and I shall have to go and look for an Artillery shooting range somewhere!

'I have given up the idea of getting letters. They will all arrive some day all right. Don't expect to hear from

me regularly. I am very fit and well and have plenty of ammunition, and, thanks to the wonderful constitution you have endowed me with, I don't seem to mind the cold either. It is impossible to say when I shall be home. It may be next year. It may depend a good deal on the Peace Conference if they ever do come to any agreement about anything. I find it very hard to hold a pencil these cold mornings. If they mean business here, I shall see it through to the end unless the W.O. sends for me to finish the Boundary Commission. Anyhow I shall not be home for Father's birthday this year—next year for certain though.

'*PS.*—I am sending this back by an American friend to Vladivostok, and it may catch the last boat going direct to Vancouver with the Canadians. I will try a postcard [1] through the Russian Post Office at the same time. It was very lucky you always wrote to 3rd Echelon at Basra. The Post Office is hopeless and letters lie for ages, and as for papers, I have given up news. I wish I had ordered *Weekly Times* [2] now.'

Entries in Diary

May 8. Left N.N. Arrived Barnaul May 9, 11 P.M.
„ 21. British Mission gave a dance at Barnaul.
„ 31. Capt. Conlan arrived.

'BARNAUL, *June* 15, 1919.

'I have just returned from a tour in the out-district Bisk to Semipalatinsk, where I have been inspecting different training centres, and have found on my return an enormous mail, and have now tabulated from you the following letters: Xmas Day; January 8, 22; February 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9; and so on right through up to April 16, and papers too numerous to mention, which are all very welcome. I seem to have been out of the world altogether, and have had no idea what

[1] Postcard not received.
[2] *Weekly Times* had been going to Vladivostok since February 8.

has been going on, as we don't get any realities. I cannot possibly answer your letters now as orders are awaiting me here to proceed to take over a new command at Yekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains on the Bolshevik front, where I am going to form a sort of Anglo-Russian Brigade of Artillery—2 batt. 18-pounders and 2 batt. 4·5 howitzers—and more I cannot tell you. These Russians are quite incapable of making any effort to regain their country, and I believe would do nothing if it was not for us. All the peasants in this country are Bolshevik and only want a man to rouse them. Every week there is a station destroyed along the line or some damage done, and if it were not for the Czechs we should be in a bad way out here. I am off to Semipalatinsk, the dirtiest, dustiest, and hottest town in Siberia, and there will take a steamer down to Omsk on the River Irtish. The journey on the river will take five days, and I hope in that time to deal with some correspondence. I don't know how I am going to get on for clothes, as it is impossible to buy even a piece of cloth except at fabulous prices in this land, and I brought very little with me. I don't dare to trust my best khaki service jacket and breeches, even if I could have them found, by the Pall Mall Co. along the railway line. And really one never knows when the whole show is going bust, and I 'm sure the British Government will not lend us much longer to the Russians unless they do something, and half the summer has gone. It is beginning to get hot and dusty ; spring has come and gone, and my lung will not improve swallowing mouthfuls of dust, so the move is lucky for me besides being a command after my own heart. We have nothing to do with the Canadian Expeditionary Force,[1] and have never had anything to do with them, and are lent to the Russian Army, so any of the communications to the C.E.F. will not reach me I fear. There are two " Steels " in it by the way—one a Col. G. L. Steel ; his letters I get sometimes.'

[1] This refers to the fact that the R.E.P.S. insisted on letters being addressed to Canadian Expeditionary Force.

'*June* 16, 1919.

'Since yesterday Captain Hodges, one of my officers, has just been carried off to hospital with typhus, caught from the Russian soldiers, no doubt, and so now we are all in for fumigating and isolation for ten days, but I hope it won't prevent my slipping off to-morrow. It is a loathsome disease and generally affects the brain, so I hope nobody else gets it. Unfortunately he has my blankets and pillow, etc., as none of these chaps seems to have anything or can think of anything ahead, and I have to go round outfitting even the mess with table-cloths, china, and stoves brought all the way from Mespot! It is impossible to get anything here except milk, butter, and meal—all very expensive—but tea, sugar, coffee, jam, unobtainable. So I'm glad to be off! Is chocolate obtainable at home now? If so, I'd like some sometimes, and if I'm not alive to eat it, it will be gratefully received by any survivors! I have never felt the same after my Kasauli treatment, and when I have had a hard day my legs seem to swell and ache, just as they did at Puri-on-Sea when I was out swimming all day. However, I'm expecting great results from the summer in the Urals, and expect I shall get clear from here without contagion. I expect these Russians will be days before they come and fumigate! We have no Comforts Fund and Canteens and so on out here like in the Expeditionary Forces. I have heard of the Red Cross Commissioner at Vladivostok, but I think he's got the sack and it's only for the Russians. I am at present wearing a pair of socks made by the ladies of Yokohama, but there's no heel to them—made just like one for sleeping in, and I couldn't walk far in it. If I have to send you a wire about anything, I may wire to Richmond Symes, 39 Charterhouse Square, London, E.C., and I have told them to pass it on.'

'Semipalatinsk, S. Siberia,
'*June* 17, 1919.

'Just a line from this out-of-the-way spot where I am waiting for the boat to start. There is a sort of railway, but

only third class from Barnaul, as it was not finished before the war began. The intention was to bridge the Irtish River here and continue the line to Sergipol, but the bridge is not begun and the line only laid in sections here and there. This must be quite the hottest, dustiest, dirtiest town in Siberia; although it had poured for days before my arrival there was then a good six inches of dust on the road. At Barnaul I refused to get in till the train, or at least my carriage, was washed and fumigated—it always takes twenty-four hours, sometimes two or three days. At Semipalatinsk I was met and deposited in a bare room at the so-called "Hotel Russie" by the Commandant, but the next day I cleared out and got into the boat. These boats are quite good, but the service is bad and the company unpleasant; the troops come down in the evening about 10 P.M. for a meal and vodka and occupy the saloon entirely, and of course I have to join as it is no use going to bed, and as I can't drink vodka I have to say I'm a teetotaller. I have a German prisoner as servant, so my German is coming back quickly.'

He arrived at Omsk June 26 at 8 P.M. and stayed on board all night. On the 27th he paid his visit to the H.Q. of B.M.M., and on July 1 Col. Harvey [1] returned from Yekaterinburg and gave him orders to proceed there. The 2nd and 3rd were passed in paying official visits to the Staff, and on the 5th he left Omsk with Stratton and Simmons, arriving at Yekaterinburg the following day.

Arrived there, he paid a visit to General Jack and afterwards to the Ordnance Office. On the 8th he had another conference with General Jack and with General Dietrikhs, and lunched with Mr. Wilton,[2] *The Times* correspondent, in the train.

[1] Chief of the Military Mission.

[2] Mr. Robert Wilton, author of *The Last Days of the Romanovs*, who, referring to the photograph opposite p. 145, writes: 'We travelled together from Yekaterinburg; the photograph was taken in the woods near Tyumen. I afterwards saw a good deal of him while he was busy with the Special Artillery Brigade.'

He next received orders to go to Tyumen, and after going there and returning to Yekaterinburg, he left for Omsk on the 12th. A letter from Yekaterinburg, July 7, describes the condition of affairs at that time :—

'YEKATERINBURG, *July* 7, 1919.

'I only arrived yesterday, and between the time of my leaving Omsk and arriving here the situation on the front had got so bad that orders have been given for the evacuation of this place before the Bolsheviki capture it. This state of affairs is rotten. Everybody is very disappointed at having to retire, but British officers are not allowed to go into action. The departure of the Hants Regiment from here has been the signal for a general exodus, and a stream of carts pours down to the station all day and night; those who can't get on a train continue their down journey on country carts. Only half a dozen of us are here. I am senior, and there are others doing *liaison* and at the Russian School. I am awaiting my trains with Artillery stores that left Omsk before they could be stopped, and of course to be in here at the death. Any night now the whole staff may disappear without saying a word to any one. So we are all on the qui vive. There is no firing to warn one of the Bolshevik approach, so the Russian Army is simply trekking backwards because they 've once started and no one can stop them. Besides, no one puts any trust in any other, and so every one thinks he is being surrounded always. The town presents a very deserted appearance, and everybody has got properly wound up. I see General Jack daily now. He lives on his car on the railway with steam up, and they are having their work cut out getting all the trains away. He is very sanguine and ridicules the idea of a Bolshevik coming here as long as an Englishman is in the place to keep them back, but I don't trust anybody here—even the coachman of the house we are in—and as soon as the Bolsheviki are really here they will cut the line behind us! and then a nice bag will remain, eight British Officers, six Railway Mission and British Consuls. We can only

raise about six rifles between us. This is going down by Hants'[1] train to-day.

'*PS.*—I have sent to you a letter for forwarding to the Minister of Pensions whoever he is. Just a few remarks on them cutting my pension.'

To this he received this reply:—

'SIR,—In reply to your letter of March 3, I am directed to point out that you have received the maximum wound gratuity to which an officer of your rank is entitled for wounds of a very severe nature.

'As regards the cessation of your wound pension the Medical Board that examined you on July 27, 1918, did not regard your disability as still very severe or likely to be permanent, and as both these conditions are necessary (Article 646, Pay Warrant) for continuation of wound pension no renewal could be granted.—I am, Sir, Your obedient Servant,

'C. M. LAMBERT
'(*for the Assistant Financial Secretary*).'

'OMSK, *August* 2, 1919.

'I last wrote you on July 7 from Yekaterinburg, which I 'm afraid is very long ago, but I have never been still since. We had a week at Yekaterinburg, and I tried then to take my guns down to Chelyabinsk as the Northern Army was on the run, and no power on earth will stop them till the Bolsheviki are tired. General Sakaroff at Chelyabinsk wanted the Brigade to come to his army, but the Bolsheviki had cut the line between Yekaterinburg and Chelyabinsk, and so we had to return to Omsk: this took us two weeks instead of two days. There were hundreds of trains each 100 yds. behind the other the whole way. General Jack managed to get nearly everything away from Yekaterinburg before the Bolsheviki took possession—a great feat, as the Russians were quite off their heads. Train after train went out with nothing but officers and women, and the whole Siberian army has disappeared for the time being. On arrival at

[1] The Hampshire Regiment.

Omsk I was just going off to Kurgan and Chelyabinsk when news came that the latter place had also been evacuated. It is going to be difficult to get out of this country for every one, and things are in a critical state; the armies do not exist, and the rouble is about a penny. I am taking my Brigade some miles down the Irtish, fifty miles north of Omsk, so as to intercept any Bolshevik attack on Omsk by Reds from Tyumen, which they will enter in a few days. Some big decisions will have to be made now, one way or the other. I will be glad to get out of this town, as the dust everywhere seems to get down into my lung. It will take me till the end of September to train this lot, so I cannot be home till Xmas, but may have to see the winter through.'

'*PS.*—I have enclosed letter from some people left behind at Yekaterinburg to the Bolsheviki. I had ten in my waggon coming down, including two families. It was impossible to keep any one out. Will you post enclosed letter if possible?'

The letter was posted on arrival; unfortunately the address has not been preserved.

Entries in diary for August show that he was in almost daily communication with Colonel Doroshinsky.

'Omsk, *August* 24, 1919.

'Dearest Mother and Father,—I am afraid I have not good news for you (my hand hurts too much to work a pen). As you will have realised, the Russian Army has become a demoralised mass and nobody knows where it is exactly. It is no use hiding things. They have retreated before the Bolshevik Army from Perm to nearly Petropavlovsk, 250 versts west of Omsk, for no reason at all. The Bolsheviki are advancing just in small handfuls, mostly in country carts, and of course if they take Omsk the whole country from Irkutsk westwards will rise in revolution and we shall have some difficulty in getting out at all. There is a small revolution going on at Barnaul and Bisk, and some friends of mine there are wiring for help. Most that can have cleared out, some into Mongolia and others towards

Vladivostok, leaving all behind. With winter coming, now beginning, and the whole country fleeing before the Reds, I can only leave to your imagination the prospects if Omsk, the seat of government, falls. No one is to be trusted. All the English soldiers have gone and half the Mission. Everything has been thrown into the battle that is to be fought in the next few days. If successful, there is no reason why the Russian Army should not return to Perm as quickly as it has retreated. That is the way with these semi-civilised people. But if it fails and the army come flying back into Omsk then it will be a case of *Sauve qui peut.* If the railway is blown up behind us we shall have to fight it out. Anyway I and four of my officers are training this Brigade of Russian Artillery—2 batt. 18-pounders, 2 batt. 4·5 howitzers—but of course they can't be ready for four weeks. We are in camp, some miles (15) outside, and I don't like it being so far out of limit. The last regular mail train goes down to-day (Sunday) with the H. Commissioner, Sir C. Eliot of East African fame, and the last English civilians. My Brigade will retire and continue its training, and we have volunteered to stay until they succeed. A possibility is that we may then be transferred to the Black Sea Front, Denikin's Army, by sea via India. The War Office, ever anxious to back a winner, I think, have decided to forsake this show. In a week's time we should know the result. Don't be alarmed, it adds to the fun to know the Bolshevik Commander has put a price of 25,000 roubles on any British officer's head. I haven't a minute or the inclination to write to any one. Perhaps it is as well I gave you Shanghai for letters. I may be there sooner than expected . . . if ever.—Best love,

'EDWARD.

'Mails will not arrive till we know if we are to clear out to the rear or not.'

'OMSK, *September* 5, 1919.

'Still no news of the decisive battle, though I understand Vladivostok has received news that Omsk has fallen! and the rouble is down to about 400 to £1. Even if these people

win they will be quite unable to continue long as everything has been thrown into this fight, and their only chance is the Bolshevik cracking up. With six[1] nations helping them, they are even quite incapable, so there is not much hope for them. I am sorry to say the military missions of all nations have been quite a failure here as the people (Russians ?) won't do anything. It has got cold all of a sudden—first bit of snow if you please—and it 's caught me unprepared. Nothing is coming up owing to the situation, so I haven't heard from home. Last paper June 21.'

The intended transfer of the Brigade down the Irtish, mentioned in the letter of August 2, seems to have been cancelled, and they remained near Omsk.

The last paragraph of Col. Steel's letter of September 5 gives the clue to what follows. The training of the Artillery continued, but with the confusion that was going on and the gradual withdrawal of the Mission it must have been uphill work. The first indication of his illness was conveyed in a telegram from Omsk dated October 14 :—

'Inform relatives of Lt.-Col. Steel Royal Artillery he is seriously ill with influenza at American Red Cross Hospital Omsk. Will notify further change.'

The next intimation was that of his death and burial in *The Times*, October 24.

The last entry in his Diary is 'September 12, Parade of Jaeger Brigade.'

The complete story is contained in the following letter and enclosures from Gen. Knox, the Chief of the B.M.M. :—

BRITISH MILITARY MISSION TO SIBERIA

'Omsk, *October* 24, 1919.

'Dear Mrs. Steel,—I wish to express to you my deep

[1] This is scarcely a fair statement. At this stage little or no help was given by any but ourselves, indeed Japan was rather obstructive (see *With the Die-hards*, Col. John Ward, C.B.).

sympathy, and the sympathy of every member of my Mission, in the terrible loss you and your husband have sustained in the death of your son, Colonel Edward A. Steel.

'As you know, he arrived in this country from Mesopotamia in the early spring, and was at first placed in charge of the training of two Artillery Brigades (24 guns in all) of British 15-pounders at Barnaul. These Brigades have since gone to the front with their infantry divisions, the 11th and 13th Siberian.

'I first met him on visiting Barnaul on June 12. He had a very uphill task in trying to get the Russian officers to work up to British Artillery standards, but he never lost heart.

'In July I transferred him to Omsk to take charge of the formation of two batteries of British 18-pounders and 2 batteries of British 4·5 howitzers that were to be raised here as part of the "Model Jaeger Brigade," the nearest approach to regular troops that the Omsk Government possesses.

'Not only the guns, but the harness and saddlery and all the instruments and transport were British, while most of the horses were those left behind by the Canadian Expeditionary Force on leaving Siberia. The personnel of the batteries was Russian, but your son had six British Artillery officers and a number of British sergeants to help him. He gave himself heart and soul to the work, and any efficiency that these four batteries have attained is due to his self-sacrificing devotion to duty. The Russian officer is a pleasant companion if not asked to work, but sometimes difficult if pushed. Your son from the first earned their respect, and, I am confident, towards the end, their affection.

'He got a feverish cold early in the month, and after some three or four days in his railway waggon he was sent out by Major Cummins of the R.A.M.C., who had been attending him, to the American Hospital some four miles from here. This was on Tuesday, October 7.

'I rode out to see him the next day; his cough was troubling him much. He grew gradually weaker, and though he had every attention from the personnel of the Hospital he died at 5 A.M. on Friday 17th. The doctor ascribes the fatal result of the illness to his having been shot through the lung. He was with him at the end, and told me he passed away without suffering at the last.

'He died on the morning of the day that had been fixed for the first firing practice of the batteries he had trained. The parade was, of course, at once postponed by the Russians, who have been wonderful in their expressions of sympathy.

'Sunday, the 19th, the day of the funeral, was a wonderfully bright and warm day. The coffin, covered with the Union Jack, was brought from the Hospital on a gun-carriage to an open space opposite the Cathedral in the centre of the town. There the procession was formed. Representatives from every unit in the Garrison took part —Admiral Koltchak's Personal Escort, the 43rd Siberian Infantry Regiment, a squadron of Siberian Cossacks, a complete Jaeger Battalion, and immediately in front of the coffin the four batteries. The pall-bearers were three British Artillery officers with reversed swords on the right— Captains Faber and Hodges and Major Cameron—and three Russian officers on the left with drawn swords. The charger was led by a British gunner immediately after the gun-carriage. The mourners included all officers of the British Military Mission in Omsk, and practically every one of any importance in the official world, including the Commander-in-Chief, General Dietrikhs, with many members of his staff, a General representing the Supreme Ruler, the President of the Council of Ministers, and General Janin, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in Western Siberia. The coffin was covered with wreaths, including one from the Mission, from Admiral Koltchak, General Dietrikhs, and all the Military Missions in Siberia. Just as the cortège was about to move off, a little girl of twelve brought a wreath and placed it on the coffin. We learned

FUNERAL PARADE IN THE SQUARE, OMSK.

Facing p. 160.

MOURNERS FORMING UP IN CATHEDRAL SQUARE.

General representing the Supreme Ruler ; General Janin, C.-in-C. of Allied Forces in Siberia ; General Knox ; General Dietrikhs, C.-in-C. of Russian Armies, Eastern Front.

GUN-CARRIAGE COVERED WITH WREATHS.

Pall-Bearers :—Capt. Faber, Capt. Hodges, Major Cameron, Officers of Royal Artillery. Three Russian Officers obscured by the gun-carriage.

Facing p. 161.

afterwards that she was a refugee whose family your son had helped.

'We walked the two miles to the cemetery slowly through crowds that uncovered as the coffin passed. At the entrance to the cemetery the troops drew up and presented arms as the gun-carriage halted and the coffin was carried to the grave by the pall-bearers. The Service was read by the British Consul, Mr. Hodgson, the volleys fired, and the Last Post sounded.

'Your son's body lies in a small railed-off space with the graves of two British soldiers on either side. We are arranging about a monument, and if possible would like to get a plain white marble cross.

'The kit is being sold with the exception of a few personal effects such as the sword-belt, field glasses, spurs, badges of rank, medal ribbon bar. These will be sent you, also a banjo. The revolver has been given to a Russian doctor friend who asked for a personal souvenir.

'I enclose in this letter :—

'*A.* Copy of Order No. 1308 issued by General Dietrikhs on October 17 with translation.

'*B.* Translation of letter received by General Knox from the Officers of the Model Jaeger Brigade.

'*C.* Translation of the Notice placed in the Russian Press by the British Military Mission on October 21.

'*D.* Copy of letter addressed by Major Cameron to the Secretary Royal Artillery Institution, Woolwich.

'I think these documents better than any poor word of mine, will prove to you the esteem in which your son was held here, and how deeply his death is deplored.—Yours sincerely,

'(Signed) ALFRED KNOX, M.G.,

'*Chief of British Military Mission to Siberia.*'

Translation of Order issued by General Dietrikhs

'The Chief of Staff to the Supreme Commander and The Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the Eastern Front

'No. 1308

'Omsk, *October* 17, 1919.

'This day, October 17, the British Military Mission and with it the Model Jaeger Artillery Regiment have sustained a severe loss in the death of the exemplary British Artillery officer, Colonel Steel, who from the first had taken a leading part in the raising and war training of the Regiment.

'To the Model Jaeger Artillery Regiment, which has now reached in every respect a high state of efficiency, Colonel Steel, as an officer in the service of a great Power allied to us, rendered every such service as might have been anticipated from an honourable, regular trained soldier, who devoted his whole soul to the task of training his own country's Artillery.

'Thrice wounded in action, and with lungs perforated by bullet wounds, Colonel Steel spared neither his strength nor his health in fulfilment of the task allotted him, but unfortunately, being unable to support our climate, fell ill with inflammation of the lungs and died, thus giving his life to the cause he had espoused.

'In the name of the Army on the Eastern Front, in the names of his comrades of the Jaeger Artillery Division mourning his loss, and in my own name, I beg the Chief of the British Military Mission, General Knox, to accept my deepest sympathy in the loss we have sustained.

'I will be especially gratified to be assured that General Knox will be good enough to convey to the relatives of the late Colonel Steel that though this British officer died in Siberia, a land alien to him, yet he died for an ideal—the ideal of the re-establishment of Russia as a great Power, and for the salvation of those who still struggle under oppression and the lash in Soviet Russia.

'May the remains of the late Colonel Steel, taken to the bosom of Siberia, rest as in his own native land.

'(Signed) Lt.-Gen. Dietrikhs.'

Translation of Letter handed to General Knox by General Volkov, Commander of the Model Jaeger Brigade

'It was with deep regret we heard to-day of the death of Colonel Steel, Royal Field Artillery, who was an object of esteem by all.

'During the three months of our collaboration with him striving to promote the interests of the Russian Army, and of the Artillery of the Model Jaeger Brigade in particular, it became our habit to value him not only as an indefatigable worker, fanatically devoted to his beloved artillery, but also as a sincere and feeling man.

'With all our heart we grieve this loss and beg Your Excellency to express our condolences and our sympathy to the British Military Mission, which has sustained so great a loss in the death of one of its best officers.

'*Commander of the Model Jaeger Brigade*	General Volkov.
Assistant of the Commander .	Col. Budkevich.
Chief of the Brigade of Artillery	Col. Doroshinsky.
Assistant of the Chief of the Brigade of Artillery . .	Col. Tjapkin.
O.C. of the 1st Regiment .	Col. Remmer.
,, *2nd Regiment* .	Col. Kruse.
C.S.O. of the Brigade . .	Staff-Capt. Andreev.
O.C. of the Field Art. Division	Capt. Matskevich.
,, *Howitzer* ,, .	Col. Erofeev.
,, *1st Field Battery* .	Staff-Capt. Konopov.
,, *2nd* ,, .	Capt. Dieterichs.
,, *1st Howitzer Battery*	Staff-Capt. Romanov.
,, *2nd* ,, .	Capt. Dvorshetsky.
,, *Park* . . .	Capt. Panacushek.'

Translation of Notice placed in Russian Press on Tuesday, October 21, 1919

'NOTICE

'General Knox and the Officers of the British Military Mission wish to express their deep thanks to their many Allied friends who attended the funeral of their dead comrade, Lt.-Col. Steel.

'They wish especially to thank the Supreme Ruler for his kind message of sympathy, and for the presence in the funeral procession of a part of his personal escort.

'They thank General Dietrikhs for his noble order No. 1308 in which he spoke of Colonel Steel's death in terms that will go straight to the heart of every British officer in Siberia.

'They thank General Volkov and the officers and men of the Model Jaeger Brigade for their loving care and thoughtful organisation of the funeral arrangements. They thank Colonel Steel's old comrades Colonel Doroshinsky and the officers and men of the Jaeger Artillery Regiment who have worked together so well to produce the fine batteries the citizens of Omsk saw to-day.

'They thank the many Ministers, Diplomatic Representatives, and other civilians who left their work to follow the gun-carriage.

'Colonel Steel died from the result of wounds received in France. He should not have volunteered for work in such a climate as Siberia, but the demonstration of spontaneous sympathy to-day showed that his work here, though it cost him his life, has not been in vain. He died, as General Dietrikhs has written, in a foreign land, "but for the great ideal of restoring Great Russia and to save those who suffer from persecution and oppression in Soviet Russia."

'The motto of his Regiment, the Royal Regiment of Artillery, is *Ubique quo fas et gloria ducunt*. It is singularly appropriate in this case.'

Copy of Letter from Major Cameron to Secretary R.A. Institution

'To the Secretary,

'Royal Artillery Institution, Woolwich.

'I am desired by General Knox, Chief of the British Military Mission to Siberia, to forward to you a translation of an Army Order published by the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Forces on the Eastern Front, on the occasion of the decease in Siberia of the late Lt.-Col. E. A. Steel, D.S.O., Royal Field Artillery.

'The terms in which this Order are couched are sufficient indication of the esteem in which the late Lt.-Col. Steel was held and of the services he rendered to the cause for which the British Military Mission to Siberia is labouring.

'General Knox desires that, if possible, space may be found in the *Royal Artillery Journal* or Pamphlet for the insertion of this announcement, since he wishes to convey to the Royal Regiment of Artillery his appreciation of the services of one of their distinguished Officers.

'AYLMER CAMERON,
'*Major, Royal Field Artillery,*
'*Personal Staff Officer to General Knox.*

'OMSK, SIBERIA, *October* 19, 1919.'

On receiving this intimation of Colonel Steel's death the following leaflet was published by the Royal Artillery, with a copy of the Order by General Dietrikhs, as requested by General Knox:—

'THE LATE MAJOR (ACTING LT.-COL.) E. A. STEEL, D.S.O., R.F.A.

'Lt.-Col. Steel joined the Regiment from the R.M. Academy as a 2nd Lt. on January 6, 1900, becoming a Lt., April 3, 1901; Capt., April 4, 1908; and Major, October 30, 1914. He served in India from March 1901 to October 1904, with the

West African Frontier Force from October 1904 to May 1908, during which time he served on patrol duty through the unsettled portion of the Ibibio and Kwa country, and with the Bende-Onitsha Hinterland Expedition (despatches twice, medal with two clasps), also with the Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission in Northern Rhodesia in 1912. He arrived in England from the Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission on July 7, 1914, for a rest. He at once reported himself for duty on the outbreak of war and proceeded with reinforcements to France, joining the 35th Battery at Soissons early in September. He took part in the fighting in the north and in the battles of Neuve Chapelle and Festubert, where he was severely wounded.

'He went home in the autumn of 1915 to train a new battery with which he went to France in April 1916. He was dangerously wounded on September 16, 1916, and was in hospital till May 1918. After a short tour with A.A. Artillery he proceeded to Mesopotamia to command a F.A. Brigade, and at the end of the year volunteered to proceed to Siberia to train Russian officers in Artillery. During the war of 1914-18 he was twice mentioned in despatches, and awarded the D.S.O. in June 1915. Colonel Steel died at Omsk, Siberia, on October 17, 1919, whilst serving with the British Military Mission to Siberia.'

The story of the British Military Mission in Siberia, if it ever be told in its entirety, will assuredly form a chapter on which no historian will desire to linger. So far—from the glimpse we have seen in the very excellent work of Col. J. Ward, C.B.—we know fairly well what happened up to his leaving in July 1919. It discloses a story of Allied diplomacy at its worst ; of international jealousies, of self-seeking politicians everywhere—only redeemed by the courage and honesty with which the members of the Mission endeavoured to reconcile their duty of encouraging the party of which Admiral Koltchak had been accepted as the recognised leader with that of shamefully abandoning them.

Not the least remarkable feature in this story will be

PROCESSION OPPOSITE CATHEDRAL.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE PROCESSION, CHARGER FOLLOWING.

Facing p. 166.

THE GRAVE OF LIEUT.-COL. E. A. STEEL.

Facing p. 167.

that at a time when deserted by America,[1] thwarted by Japan, but half-heartedly encouraged by the French, this noble band of Russian officers from Koltchak downwards combined to do such extraordinary honour to the subject of this Memoir in recognition of the fact that he had sacrificed his life in their cause, and that the B.M.M. with which he had been associated had given them their heartfelt support under very difficult circumstances.

This Memoir, already perhaps too long, may be fittingly concluded with an extract from the *West Cumberland Times* entitled 'Countryside Crack,' over the signature of John Peel:—

'The *West Cumberland Times* recently recorded the death in Russia of Col. Edward A. Steel. This distinguished officer came of a Cumberland clan which has a long and honourable military record. The family has been associated with Cumberland from mediaeval times.' The writer passes in review the history of the family, giving copious extracts from a *Memoir of Col. James Steel, C.B.*, written and printed by his son (the author of this Memoir). He then comments on the career and death of Lt.-Col. E. A. Steel, quoting at considerable length from the R.A. Institution leaflet as to his military career, and from the letter and enclosures of General Knox as to his last service and death, paraphrasing the description of the funeral given by the latter. The writer then quotes from this the following incident: 'Just as the cortège was about to move off, a little girl of twelve brought a wreath and laid it on the coffin. We learned afterwards that she was a refugee whose family your son had helped.' (See letter of August 2, 1919.)

[1] This refers only to official America, *i.e.* the Government of the United States. The American Red Cross, known all over the world for its unselfish and unstinted help to all nations and in all countries—and especially to our own—has been conspicuous in lending aid to the various Missions in Siberia, and though, owing to the unsettled conditions at this time, the members were being withdrawn, their work remained, and the Russian establishment carried on its ministrations under Dr. Judd, to whom we are indebted for the interesting photographs of the funeral and grave.

'These last two sentences,' continued the writer, 'are the most affecting in the description of this impressive funeral. They speak of a simple but a most touching tribute to a kindly helpful man who was full of practical sympathy, just as the other tributes testify to respect and regard for an efficient and devoted officer who died while bent on doing his duty to the end.' After further appreciative comments on the arrangements for the burial service so feelingly described by General Knox, and the spot in the cemetery in which he lies 'with the bodies of two British soldiers on either side,' the writer thus concludes: 'The graves of the Steel family are scattered far and wide. There are many leagues between Brighton and Omsk. The Indian fighter whose career recalls a remote and romantic past died in England. His grandson rests in Siberia after honourable service in France and Russia. "But little he 'll reck if they let him sleep on, in the grave where a Briton has laid him."'

NOTE BY MRS. STEEL

Recently Major Aylmer Cameron, D.S.O., R.F.A., sent us many ribbons which he had taken off the wreaths laid on Lieut.-Col. Steel's grave the day before the Bolshevik troops took possession of Omsk, also an oak box which he says 'was made by the grateful hands of the Russians for whom Edward gave his life.'

The inscriptions hand-painted on the ribbons are very touching: they include one from the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army, one from General Janin and the officers of the French Mission, the Japanese War Mission, and the Model Jaeger Artillery, and the Chief and Staff of other Departments; also from General Knox and officers of the British Military Mission.

GENEALOGY OF EDWARD ANTHONY STEEL

Edward Anthony Steel, younger son of Col. J. P. Steel, late of the Royal Engineers, and Annie Josephine, second daughter of General Sir H. L. Thuillier, Col.-Commandant Royal Artillery, and Annie, daughter of George Gordon Macpherson, I.M.S.

Col. J. P. Steel was third son of Col. James Steel, H.E.I.C.S., and Adelaide, daughter of Antonio Angelo Ramondo, H.E.I.C.S., and Elizabeth Martha Bland.

Col. James Steel, C.B. (1792-1859) was third son of Joseph Steel of Cockermouth, attorney-at-law and Captain in the Cumberland Militia, and Dorothy, third daughter of John Ponsonby, Esq., of Haile Hall, Cumberland.

Joseph Steel (1758-1842) was fourth son of John Steele [1] of Birks, Harby Brow Hall, and Hollins, etc., and Phoebe, daughter of Richard Skelton of Rowrah (1728-1817). He dropped the final 'e.'

John Steele (1721-1770) was eldest son of James Steele of High and Low Wreay, Birks, Harby Brow Hall, etc., and Elizabeth, daughter of Anthony Benn, Esq., of Hensingham (*b* 1692, *m.* 1714, *d.* 1791).

James Steele (1674-1752) was eldest son of John Steele of High and Low Wreay, and Bridget, daughter of John Benn of Scradgate, Hensingham (*m.* 1673, *d.* 1719).

John Steele (1641-1729) was eldest son of James Steele of Threepthwaite (later of High and Low Wreay), and Bridget (not traced, buried at St. Bees, 1645).

James Steele (1600-1673) was younger son of William Steele of Crossfield and Threepthwaite, and Agnes (*b.* at Cleator, *d.* 1608).

William Steele of Threepthwaite was younger son of John Steele of Crossfield; originally a copyholder or customary tenant, he became a freeholder, 28-29 Elizabeth (*see* F. of F. Cumberland).

Beyond this the ancestry cannot be traced, but they have belonged to the soil of Cumberland since Edward III. (*see* Lay Subsidy, 6 Edward III.).

[1] The name, originally spelled with a final 'e,' was changed to Steel by Edward's great-grandfather.

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